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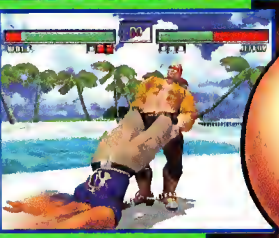
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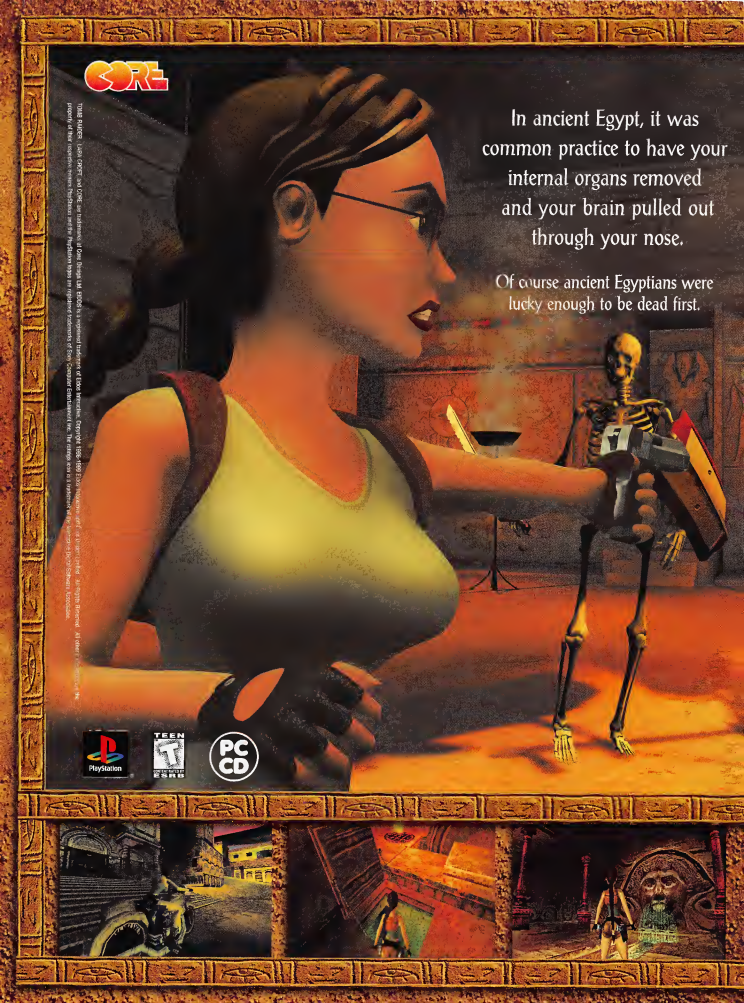
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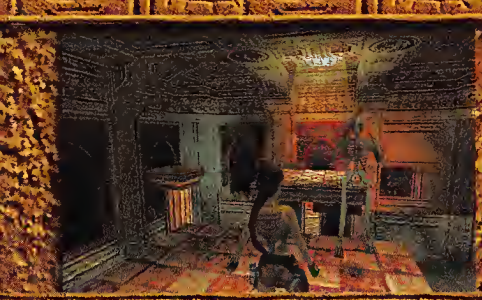

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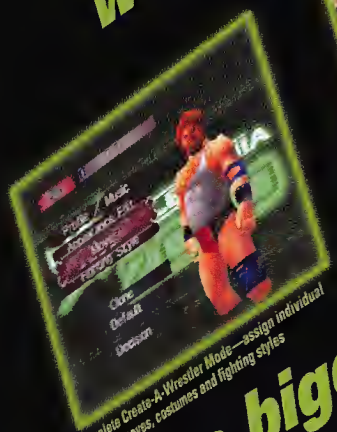
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86 WrestleMania III — Breaks live attendance records with a capacity crowd

87 WrestleMania 2 — The first WrestleMania battle royal

88 WrestleMania V — Shawn Michaels' WrestleMania debut as a member of The Rockers™

89 WrestleMania IV — Plays host todoa First WrestleMania Heavyweight title tournament

90 WrestleMania VII — The Undertaker scores a decisive victory in his WrestleMania debut

91 WrestleMania VI — The tide turns as both Mega Powers lose in the same night

92 WrestleMania VIII — Shawn Michaels and the Undertaker continue their rise to the top with wins

93 WrestleMania IX — Federation Championship changes hands twice in one night

94 WrestleMania X — Shawn Michaels and Razor Ramon wrestle for the IC Strap in an original hardcore classic

95 WrestleMania XI — X-Pac™ and Road Dogg™ make their WrestleMania debuts as ringside support for Jeff Jarrett™ and Razor Ramon™

96 WrestleMania XII — Heartbreak Kid Shawn Michaels wins a 60 minute Iron Man match for the title

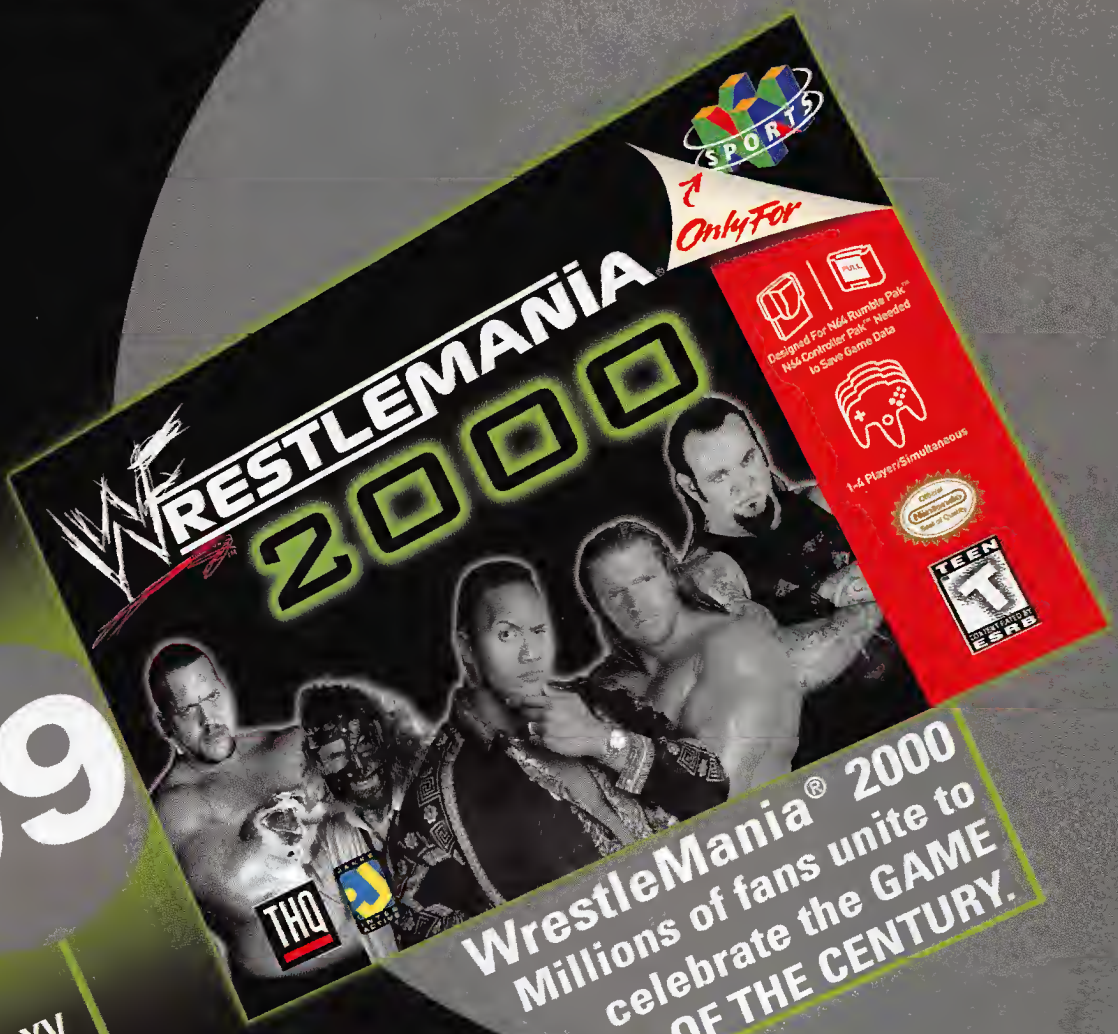
97 WrestleMania 13 — The Undertaker® begins his second Federation Championship reign with a main event victory

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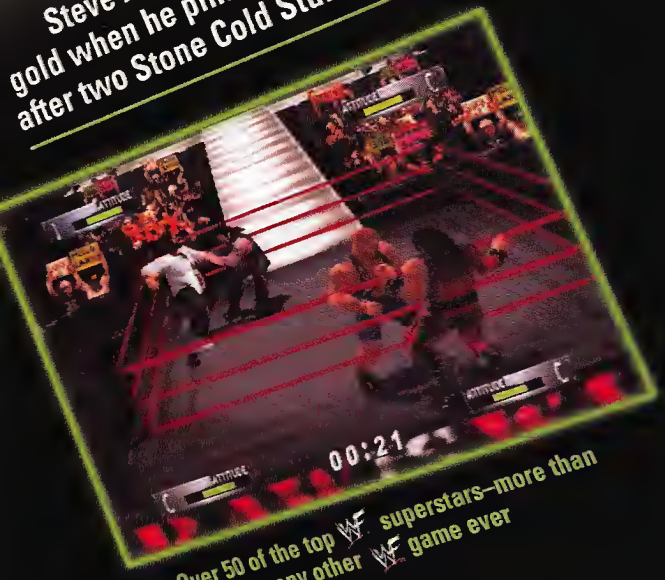
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ED ZONE

Just what exactly constitutes a review? Or more importantly, what should a review contain? This nagging little question has become a magnet for much discussion of late on the Internet and in our reader mail. On one end of the spectrum, you have our loyal fans; those that love the way we bring our own unique perspective to the market. Then you have the, other, 'serious' group that repeatedly lashes us for "inserting our opinion into the review" because "I just want the facts, none of the fluff" and "How dare you have an opinion that doesn't mirror my own?" This latter group of people, my friends, doesn't have a clue in their empty little heads.

For starters, a review is all about the personal opinion of the person writing it. It's not a PR fact sheet nor is it a launching pad to get more ad pages into a book (people that keep positing that fact about us or our competition probably also think that Kennedy was killed by little green men in conjunction with the CIA and the Mafia). Those of you that insist on stating that all you want is a dry recitation of the 'facts' clearly are very confused. The facts only go so far when you bring in personal opinion, bias, likes/dislikes, and what the editor had for lunch that day (OK, so maybe that doesn't count for a lot...). If you want facts, get on a PR company's mailing list and you'll be inundated with all the 'facts' you could possibly stomach; and probably many you couldn't. We're not in the business of simply offering up the facts, since beyond number of levels, number of characters, etc., there are no facts. A review isn't an arena for the facts—it's a forum for criticism—as harsh and as opinionated as that may be.

Look at it this way: Do those of you that bemoan the state of 'pro' reviews ever stop and think for one second that it's a good thing that people have opinions that vary from your own, or from the perceived 'norm'? For instance, when we took a large hatchet to *FFVIII*, did anyone ever think (and this is especially aimed at the legion of folks that **hadn't** even played the game upon reading the review) that maybe, just maybe, we genuinely didn't like it; that we weren't out to 'prove a point' or have some other ulterior motive? Is that even possible in much of the 'we obviously can't accept that someone doesn't completely agree with us' mentality that pervades the Internet? The most annoying part of all these responses is that the second we address any of them, we get an overly-apologetic letter saying how sorry they were about being so "confrontational" and "overbearing." How 'bout this instead: Think about what you're saying before you say it—it's amazing what happens when you think about what you're doing before firing off an amazingly abusive e-mail that **nobody** around here takes seriously.

For those of you that actually offer constructive criticism (you're in a great minority, but we appreciate it), I thank you. We take any **constructive** comments quite seriously. If you have an issue with something we say, then by all means say it (lord knows I do when I see something in a non-gaming mag I disagree with). But say it in a way that you'd like to be treated, rather than a laughable litany of threats, profanity, and nonsense that no one with even a 2nd grade reading level would take to heart.

Anyhow, that's my 2 cents on the 'Great Mag Debate of '99.' As a brief aside, for those of you that ever doubted that Dreamcast would fly, well, how's that crow tastin'? Pretty good, I hope. As for PS2, yes, we're excited—so don't bombard us with a pile of mail about how we love Sega and hate Sony... it simply isn't true; something that will grow very apparent as PS2 development really ramps up (but if you still think so, file it away with that thought about how pro-magazines sell reviews for money—and then flush yourself down the drain with it). Till next month, I'm still...

EM
Editorial Director
Eric Mylonas

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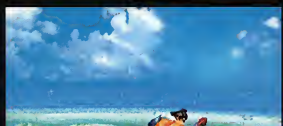


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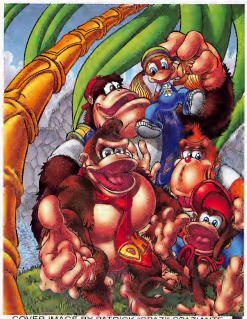
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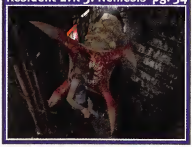
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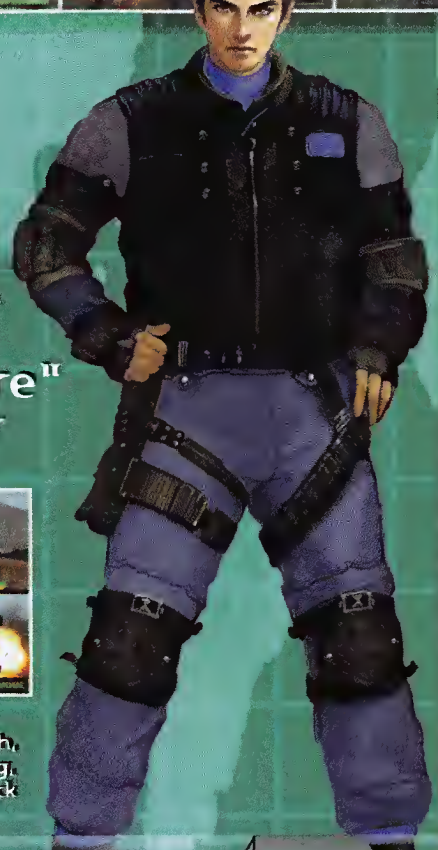
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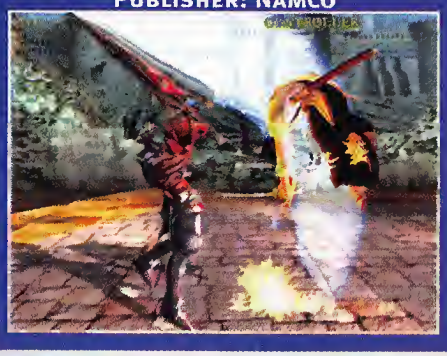
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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

December 1999

Soul Calibur

Publisher: Namco



Reader's Top Ten

1) *Soul Calibur* - DC
2) *WWF Attitude* - N64
3) *Final Fantasy VIII* - PS
4) *NFL 2K* - DC
5) *Mario Golf* - N64
6) *LoK: Soul Reaver* - PS
7) *Sonic Adventure* - DC
8) *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* - N64
9) *Xenogears* - PS
10) *Goldeneye* - N64

Reader's Most Wanted

1) *RE: Code Veronica* - DC
2) *Shen Mue* - DC
3) *Wrestlemania 2000* - N64
4) *Perfect Dark* - N64
5) *Crazy Taxi* - DC
6) *Ogre Battle 64* - N64
7) *Castlevania Resurrection* - DC
8) *Final Fantasy IX* - PS
9) *Legend of Mana* - PS
10) *Virtual On 2 (VOOT)* - DC

Resident Evil: Code Veronica



GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN

*IMPORT TITLE



1) *Monster Rancher 2* - PS
2) *Grandia* - PS
3) *Sonic Adventure* - DC
4) *Bangaio** - N64
5) *SkullMonkeys* - PS
6) *Dukes of Hazzard* - PS
7) *Donkey Kong 64* - N64
8) *Earthworm Jim* - Genesis
9) *Harvest Moon* - N64
10) *Chao Adventure* - DC(VMU)



1) *Virtual On 2 v5.4* - Arcade
2) *Monster Rancher 2* - PS
3) *Magical Drop Pocket* - NGP
4) *Soul Calibur* - DC
5) *Jambo Safari* - Arcade
6) *Wrestlemania 2000* - N64
7) *Virtual Tennis* - Arcade
8) *NFL 2K* - DC
9) *C&C Tiberian Sun* - PC
10) *Power Stone* - DC



1) *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* - PS
2) *Crash Team Racing* - PS
3) *Wipeout 3* - PS
4) *Power Stone* - Arcade
5) *NFL 2K* - DC
6) *Tiberian Sun* - PC
7) *Grand Theft Auto 2* - PS
8) *Silent Scope* - Arcade
9) *Alien vs. Predator* - PC
10) *Toby* - PC



1) *Monster Rancher 2* - PS
2) *Soul Calibur* - DC
3) *NFL 2K* - DC
4) *RE3: Nemesis* - PS
5) *Final Fantasy VIII* - PS
6) *Harvest Moon 64* - N64
7) *Sonic Adventure* - DC
8) *NBA Showtime* - Arcade
9) *Quake II* - PC
10) *Alter Ego* - C64



1) *Zombie Revenge** - DC
2) *Bangaio** - N64
3) *Power Stone* - DC
4) *Rakugaki Showtime** - PS
5) *Formula 1 1999* - PS
6) *Crash Team Racing* - PS
7) *Tokyo Extreme Racing* - DC
8) *House of the Dead* - Arcade
9) *SkullMonkeys* - PS
10) *Metal Slug 1st Mission* - NGP



1) *EverQuest* - PC
2) *C&C Tiberian Sun* - PC
3) *Monster Rancher 2* - PS
4) *NFL 2K* - DC
5) *Grand Theft Auto 2* - PS
6) *NHL FaceOff 2000* - PS
7) *Time Loop* - PS
8) *Soul Calibur* - DC
9) *RE3: Nemesis* - PS
10) *Nuclear Strike 64* - N64

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Developer's Top Ten

This Month's Guest:
Doug TenNapel
President, CEO, and Creative Genius, The Neverhood

1. *Robotron X* - PS
2. *Command & Conquer* - PC
3. *Descent* - PC
4. *Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine* - Genesis
5. *Asheron's Call* - PC (Beta)
6. *Myst* - PC
7. *Mario 64* - N64
8. *Donkey Kong Country* - SNES
9. *Pokemon Blue* - GameBoy
10. *Toe Jam & Earl* - Genesis

Robotron X



Publisher:
GT Interactive

Doug TenNapel, in addition to being a fantastic artist, is a true gamer. He's been playing games as long as, or longer than, most of the GameFan staff. Doug's worked on such games as *Jurassic Park* (Genesis), *Earthworm Jim* and *EWJ2* (Genesis and SNES). In the last few years he's been busy at his company, The Neverhood, where the claymated Klaymen (*SkullMonkeys*) sprang forth from his cranium to rival his earlier creation, Earthworm Jim. Check his stuff out at www.dougtennapel.com, as well as this month's Graveyard.



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EDITOR ROUNDUP

Since the idea for everyone's Holiday wishlists was used as a feature elsewhere in the magazine, we'll have to go with everyone's unspoken wish... for us to forget the most embarassing moments in our lives. But in true GF fashion, here we are rubbin' salt in the wounds and immortalizing all those moments which make us blush.

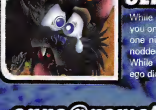
ecm@gamefan.com



ECM

Ahh, E3... a time of good memories for most—playing new games, meeting cosmonauts, and intense partying every night. But ECM's highlight of the show was the morning after, when last night's dinner ended up in the backseat of Eggo's car... and Dango's lap.

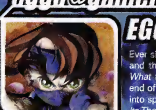
cerberus@gamefan.com



CERBERUS

While his moments would fill a library, I'll give you one of the more sedate events: going home one night after a long 'crunch time,' Cerberus nodded off and drove into a nearby 18-wheeler. While the truck escaped unscathed, Cerberus' ego did not—it's still getting run over daily.

eggo@gamefan.com



EGGO

Ever since the day ECM first sat in Eggo's car and the CD that came on was Poison's *Look What the Cat Dragged In*, he hasn't heard the end of it. Every month or so, people will break into spontaneous renditions of *Every Rose Has Its Thorn*... and that's not even the right album...

fury@gamefan.com



FURY

Fury will pay good money for the guy who invents life's first Undo button. What started as Quote of the Day on the website has grown into an anecdote of epic proportions. Even months later, he gets heckled for it at least three times a day. The question he asked? "How do you do Roman Numerals in MS-Word again?"

dangohead@gamefan.com



DANGOHEAD

When Lance gave his mom his only means of transportation, leaving him social life-less—actually that didn't change, a torrent of momma's boy jokes were the result. Now, it's thumb sucking, bed-wetting, nancy boy needs to learn that 'Nice Guys finish last.'



THE 6th MAN

Who can forget the time the 6th Man tried to pick a fight at the Sega Dreamcast launch party? Shoving some guy to the ground, our surly editor had a bit too much liquid courage for his own good... and ended up being tossed out of the party. Doh!

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THE ART DEPARTMENT

reubus@gamefan.com

Under Construction

REUBUS

Up until recently, Reubus could be seen cruisin' about in his 'vintage' Ford Galaxie. Not embarassing? If you consider a broken-down, Tetanus-carrying, anti-chick magnet not embarassing...oh hey, Fury...

waka@gamefan.com

Under Construction

WAKA

Working on a late-nite deadline, Waka put his head on his desk and promptly fell asleep. Pranksters that we are, we duct-taped his head to the desk... then banged on the table, so he awoke with a start—ever see a really angry chihuahua tied to a board?

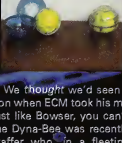
tao@gamefan.com

Under Construction

TAO

When Tao screws up, people notice. Case in point? The PINK cover for our July '99 issue. To this day, he claims it was supposed to be PURPLE, but we know it's his favorite color and he's not willing to admit it.

PRODUCTIVITY
KILLER OF THE MONTH



Dyna-Bee

Height: 2.35 in.
Weight: 7.09 oz.
Blood Type: O
Special Abilities: Driving People Mad

We *thought* we'd seen the last of this infernal contraption when ECM took his mallet to it a few months back. But just like Bowser, you can't keep a good villain down, and the Dyna-Bee was recently resurrected by an anonymous staffer who, in a fleeting moment of insanity, bought ANOTHER Dyna-Bee.

The dreaded sound of this instrument of destruction is something akin to "WhirrrRRRRrrrrrRRRRrrr..." (repeat ad nauseum), and that cacophony alone is enough to drive less-stable souls insane. Like the song of the siren, the howl of the Dyna-Bee causes unwary gamers to lose their minds and cry out in concert with the wails of the damned. It's designed to workout your wrist muscles, but its true purpose is much more nefarious than that—it shatters all attempts at concentration if you're ensnared by its demonic song.

ECM, Eggo, and Joe-D have sworn vengeance against this hellspawn invention, and any young adventurers brave enough to journey into the *GameFan* cavern will be handsomely rewarded if they can find and destroy this mythical beast once and for all. Let's just pray that this seed of Mephistopheles does not rear its ugly head again, after we send it back to the depths of its Hell-spawned vat...

This month in GameFan's BOX-O-FUN!

Top 10 Video Game Excuses

1) "Damn controller!" — I JUMPED at the last second... really, I did.
2) "Damn lag!" — the ever-popular excuse for gamers unaccustomed to Internet latency... I had him in my sights, then he teleported!
3) "The computer cheats!" — this popular excuse was perpetuated by the AI in sports games and CPU characters in *Mortal Kombat*.
4) "That fog's there for ambience..." —a great line used by early N64 game developers.
5) "CAMPER!!!" — the primary attributed cause for death in a First-Person Shooter.
6) "Ugh! The slowdown threw me off..." — You see, the ninja gaming skills were in full effect, but I didn't take into account the delay as the engine chugged, hence, a brief flash of weakness was the only chink in my armor which the game used to kill me. (Uhh, sure pal).
7) "I was distracted by X..." — where X = a phone call, Mom, doorbell, cat, significant other, earthquake, lightning strike, etc.
8) "Damn glare!" — yes, a real-life lens flare got in my eye, causing me to look away, and when I turned back, I was staring at a Game Over screen.
9) "I did the move, but it didn't come out!" — After playing a fighting game for eight years, you never screw up a super motion... right?!?!
10) "Why you gotta play cheap?" — This question is always asked by the people who play fighting games without arrows. Of course, it's always answered with the OTHER excuse... "It's in the game!"

CHICKEN OF THE MONTH

Roadside Aid Kit/Lantern

Now here's a first, a tie for Chicken of the Month... both of which happen to be useful. Unlike the plethora of unfashionable clothing, bulky keychains, and dirty jock straps that we receive, these two Super Chicken are both practical.

First off is Infogrames' *Demolition Racer* First Aid Kit—something Reubus *could've* used when his Ford Galaxie kept breaking down... (that car has since been retired to the great Demolition Derby in the sky). Inside, there's useful items such as tire sealant, jumpar cables, and a tie-down stretch cord. Of course, the downside is that the juvenile GF staffers now have access to flares, a siphon pump ("Why's my tank empty!?! I filled it yesterday!"), and a bright yellow "HELP" sign.

The second outstanding chicken is Capcom's self-powered *Dino Crisis* lantern. Just crank the lever yourself, and you don't need to worry about batteries! ...now will you stop pointing that thing in my face?!

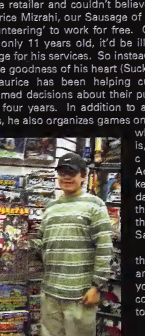


SAUSAGE OF THE MONTH



The other day we walked into our local video game retailer and couldn't believe what we saw. Maurice Mizrahi, our Sausage of the Month, was 'volunteering' to work for free. Of course, since he's only 11 years old, it'd be illegal for him to charge for his services. So instead, he does it out of the goodness of his heart (Sucker!).

Maurice has been helping customers make informed decisions about their purchases for the past four years. In addition to answering questions, he also organizes games on shelves, knows where everything is, and helps sell consoles. Admirable, now keep it up, and maybe someday you'll get paid for it! Until then, you'll have to settle for the honor of being *GameFan's* Sausage of the Month.



If you'd like to be Sausage of the Month, send in a picture and cite examples of how you're a Super Sausage, hardcore gamer. Direct all entries to Posty's address.



Some secrets come back to haunt you.

Just days after surviving the grisly disaster at the mansion lab, Jill Valentine resigns from S.T.A.R.S. and attempts to escape a nightmarish city in ruins. Trapped in a town crawling with hordes of flesh-eating zombies, hideous mutants, and a relentless new nemesis, she must rely on cunning and brute force to stay alive. What she soon discovers is that the evil created by Umbrella Corporation's bio-tech terror is even more horrifying than she ever imagined...



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PlayStation
RESIDENT EVIL 3
NEMESIS
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VIEWPOINT











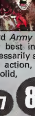
G Graphics
C Control
P Play Mechanics
M Music
O Originality



Army Men: Air Attack
PlayStation
3DO
Shooting

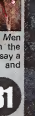
Looking for a *Strike* series game lite? Seems that *Army Men Air Attack* may fit the bill. Essentially a much-more 'arcadey' *Nuclear Strike*, in *AMAA* you pilot an attack chopper out to destroy the insidious tan forces in standard *Army Men* style. Thankfully, this is the best in the series, though that doesn't necessarily say a lot. Fast, adrenaline-soaked action, and decent gameplay add up to a solid, low-80s experience.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 8 O 7 — **81**



This should've been called *Army Men: Air Strike*, because that's basically what it is... a *Strike* game. Can't say enough how much I prefer this to previous *Army Men* installments. The gameplay's fun, the theme is cool, and the pace is frenetic. There's even strategy involved in using the winch to pick up and drop things at choice moments. Even the engine is very solid. This is one of those pick-up-and-play titles. Game melt-some!

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 — **85**



I'm a sucker for *Nuclear Strike*-style games; there's just not enough of them out there. Instant, arcade-y gratification is awesome and sorely lacking in many of the games we play today. The whole 'toy' theme is a needed gimmick—and a good one—that keeps even the most basic level interesting. What other game lets you winch an acorn and slam it atop an anthill? Not one that I can remember. *Air Attack*'ll give you your fill...

G 8 C 9 P 8 M 9 O 7 — **88**



BoomBots
PlayStation
Southpeak
Fighting

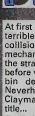
The Neverhood's swan song finally arrives and while it isn't the platforming follow-up I'd hoped for, it certainly puts its own spin on the 3D fighting genre. Featuring more of that trademark Neverhood claymation and solid, if a little younger-skewed gameplay. However, there's one problem: it doesn't feel as if their heart was in it. As probably the last developer dragged kicking and screaming into 3D, it shows. Still, it is the end of an era and deserves a look. Miss you guys!

G 7 C 7 P 9 M 9 O 8 — **82**



At first glance, this looks like a terrible fighting game... the collision is iffy, the play mechanics are primitive, and the strategies are limited. But before you make *BB* to bargain bin death, know that The Neverhood's zany sense of humor and Claymation FMV ALMOST rescued this title... I had to play through it just to see more, and I was laughing at the FMV. While not a masterpiece, it's a must-see for novelty alone. Rent it and love it.

G 6 C 4 P 7 M 9 O 7 — **73**



Okay, I love the character designs. I've been a huge fan of Doug TenNapel artist extraordinaire, since his *Earthworm Jim* days, but sadly I can't say the same about his game designs. Stop-motion animation is a lost art, and I'm glad to see he's used it to the fullest, but I'm a firm believer that art and animation can never supercede good gameplay. This might cut it for your younger siblings, but think you might wanna pass for something like *Rakugaki*.

G 7 C 5 P 7 M 5 O 10 — **60**



Crash Team Racing
PlayStation
SCEA
Racing

Hey look! Another cart racing game. So I even have to go into a litany as to why I don't like these types of games anymore? Sure, the game is fun for a while. Take the familiar (and not so familiar) *Crash* characters; toss in perhaps the best engine the console has ever seen; bake on high for one hour and you might get something like *CTR*. The unique power slide technique is slippery fun and the game looks plain amazing. But it's still another cart game.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 5 — **83**



OK, this better be the last cart racer we see on PlayStation because I don't think anything can top this. The reliance on power-ups, the ridiculous tracks to the *Mario Kart* days is a welcome sight for PS cart fans. And the engine... it's a beast that stomps all over other PlayStation games, picks 'em up, and stomps on 'em some more... even the 4-player mode! *CTR* is a proper Naughty Dog send-off for their lovable bandicoot.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 7 — **93**



So shoot me, I love *Crash Bandicoot*. Add to that the fact that I love racing games, and it's a match made in heaven. *Mario Kart* is what *CTR* wants to be, but—sorry Miyamoto-san—it's oh-so much better. Lots of options and three kinds of turbos ensure a long play life. Like any good racer, *CTR* compels you to out your best time, even if by fractions of a second. Naughty Dog's design is as good as ever. Love it or hate it, *CTR* is truly a milestone for the genre.

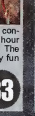
G 9 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 9 — **99**



Dune 2000
PlayStation
Westwood
Strategy

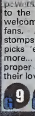
Try not to pay too much attention to the raving looney next to me, but *Herzog Zwei* spawned the RTS genre (at least he got the console right... too bad the PC edition came first). You've heard this brokken record speech before... console ports of PC RTS's don't translate well because of the interface. Thankfully, *Dune 2K* has a console-friendly interface and lots of atmosphere and movies, but it's still a console port.

G 6 C 9 P M 0 6 — **74**



The granddaddy of 'em all is back! Anyone remember *Dune* on the Genesis? It's the game that spawned the real-time strategy genre as we know it. *Dune 2000* is a take on that game. I don't know what to think of *D2K*—I'm an RTS addict, but that's usually in front of my PC or laptop. I'm not too comfortable playing on my PS. I guess if you have nowhere to go to get your RTS fill, then there's nothing better than the originator.

G 8 C 7 P 8 M 9 O 9 — **90**



ECM might kill me for this, but I loved David Lynch's *Dune* film. The Genesis game, on the other hand, was that was a different story—It was a great RTS game if you liked the genre. I personally find RTS games boring, wishing they'd forver stay on PCs. But, it's not like there's much of a selection of RTS titles on the PS and *D2K* does deliver a bit (sorry ECM) of the old *Dune* magic. If you're an RTS freak, check it out... and avoid the sand worms.

G 8 C 6 P 5 M 8 O 8 — **72**



Grandia
PlayStation
SCEA
Role-Playing

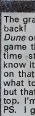
Well, it's a couple years after the fact, but we're finally getting *Grandia* in the U.S.! Game Arts' baby enters an already-ugly RPG war on the PlayStation, but it's still one of the best in its class, and should do well. Unfortunately, the Saturn fury didn't suffer from as much slowdown as this, and the English voices are... unprofessional. But don't let these blemishes dissuade you from purchasing this title, which is better than *FFVIII*.

G 8 C 7 P 9 M 8 O 8 — **93**



As far as RPGs go *Grandia* is one of my all time favorites. I purchased the Saturn version so long ago I forgot how much I loved this game. *Grandia*'s magic hasn't gone stale from the time I played it till now. The colorful graphics and story translated perfectly onto the PlayStation. Ditch the *FFVIII*'s of the world and try some fresh stuff like *Thousand Arms*. Even ESPN baby has so much more to offer than Squall and his uptight schoolmates.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 7 — **93**



I must admit that I love nearly all things Saturn-related. Though *Panzer Dragoon* was my RPG of choice, *Grandia* had an excellent story and adorable characters. Though the PS conversion is identical to its Saturn counterpart, it sadly might fall victim to the fact that there are just too many RPGs heading to the PS. While I would recommend this title over *Legend of Dragoon*, it has some hefty competition with the likes of *FFVIII* and *Thousand Arms*.

G 8 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 7 — **85**

"Mr. Lucas, let's cash in on the *Star Wars* trend with a shoddy attempt at recreating the movie!" You know someone walked into George's office and uttered this very phrase. I'm a *Star Wars* fan—isn't everyone? But I'm not this much of a *SW* fan. Control is non-existent, as is anything worthwhile. The only thing that is good is the musical score, and an audio CD is much cheaper than a game. This is just plain bad. Let me stop playing!

G 6 C 7 P 5 M 10 O 2 **60**

"I have a bad feeling about this..." Another *Star Wars* cash cow game? Then why so high a score? The John Williams music video is worth the price of a rental at least. Plus, the game has *Star Wars* elements and music. Unfortunately, the gameplay isn't that sound... Yep, you can toss this one in the bargain bin *Star Wars* pile. For every *Episode I: Racer*, there's a *Phantom Menace*—the good balanced out by the bad.

G 7 C 7 P 4 M 9 O 7 **68**

Oh dear, what happened here?! While *Racer* proved to be one of the better console racers available, this is, well, menacing. Busted graphics, zero gameplay—it's like LucasArts didn't even bother trying. Listen, when you've had games as cool as the *Jedi Knight* series in the past, there is no excuse for drivel like this. The graphics are poor and the gameplay? Let's just say they checked it at Coruscant. The force is weak with this one, thus sayeth James Earl Jones.

G 6 C 4 P 4 M 9 O 7 **55**



Phantom Menace
PlayStation
LucasArts
Action

Don't expect *Resident Evil 3* to differ much from *RE2*. With that said, *Nemesis* is a grade A survival horror-fest. Take one look at the gorgeous pre-rendered backgrounds and you'll wish *Dino Crisis* followed suit. The Nemesis character looks extremely menacing, straight out of a *Hellraiser* movie, and I loved the option to select random plot choices... very original! But between *RE2* N64 and *Dino Crisis*, I've had my share of Survival Horror for the next 10 years.

G 8 C 4 P 8 M 7 O 5 **89**

Will someone please tell Shinji Mikami that *RE* is in need of a gargantuan overhaul in the control department? I'm sick of three-point turning. Other than the dead horse called control, the game is what *RE* fans want—more of the same with some nifty gameplay goodies. If *Nemesis*' extra weapons, action and added zombies can keep skeptics like myself happy then everyone will dig it. *Nemesis* closes that gap between an A+ game and an A+ movie.

G 8 C 5 P 8 M 8 O 5 **91**

Survival Horror returns with a vengeance (though it isn't making quite the same impact, especially after *Dino Crisis* already hit our hot little hands). Raging fire and water effects (which rival such elements on Dreamcast), as well as the introduction of the socially-inept Nemesis (Fury could learn some lessons from this guy), this is a solid entry into the aging saga. Sadly, I'm getting a little weary of it, but hey, I know the world isn't... <sigh>.

G 9 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 6 **85**



Resident Evil 3
PlayStation
Capcom
Survival Horror

While not as amped about *Space Invaders* as Eckum, I still think I could spend some serious time with this one. The new weapons and new graphics really do make *SI* like a brand new game. It's not brain surgery, but that's what's so great about it. Don't listen to Eggo, he barely remembers what the 2600 is. Get your arcade reflexes ready for an alien invasion. Do I hear some 2-player competitive *Space Invaders* action between ECM and myself?

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 9 O 7 **88**

Hate to rain on angry dwarf's parade, but this game is not good... Well, I take that back, it was good, oh... 20 years ago on the Atari 2600. But in today's world of video games, I want a li'l more than pillowy dreams of what games once were if I'm gonna fork over some hard-earned (well, if you can call my job taxing) cash. The gameplay is classic *Space Invaders* with a few new power-ups and bosses. But ask yourself if that's a good thing.

G 7 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 4 **59**

Woo-hoo! I loved the recent update to *Asteroids* and love this just as much. When I sat down to Viewpoint this game, I actually lost about a solid hour of time without once looking up from the screen—it's that good! I suppose part of it is nostelgia, but with a relatively minor graphical bump, this game is as playable as it ever was. In fact, I'm now feverishly waiting for a proper update to *Missile Command*... give it to me now!

G 7 C 8 P 9 M 6 O 7 **91**



Space Invaders
PlayStation
Activision
Shooting

What gives, this game has awesome graphics and tight control, couldn't be a *Spyro* game... right!? I must agree with Eggo about *Spyro* being too much of a scavenger hunt, but hey, what else do you expect in a kids game (wow, yet another switch... what a change of pace)? The addition of mini-games does help to break up the monotony but for the most part expect lots of pointless wandering. If only the gameplay could compete with the visuals...

G 9 C 9 P 7 M 7 O 6 **90**

The big difference between this and *Crash Team Racing* is that *CTR* is fun. Scavenger hunting, on the other hand, is not. Granted, *Spyro 2* is made for kids, and maybe they won't be as demanding in the gameplay category, but I seek a bit more... make that, a lot more. Other than that, the engine is a brute—just gawk as Spyro breaks into a full gallop with nary a broken seam to be seen. Technically, it's impressive, but gameplay-ically, it's not.

G 9 C 8 P 6 M 7 O 6 **78**

OK, I didn't like last year's edition of this game. It became amazingly repetitive in short order (about an hour or two), and while it was one of the most graphically impressive PS games, looks aren't everything (just ask me, <grin>). Thankfully, Insomniac listened to their critics 'cause this year, it's head and shoulders above last. The engine is more refined and the gameplay has a lot more variety. Still, I can't help but think I've played this a thousand times before.

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 7 O 7 **81**



Spyro (2)
PlayStation
SCEA
Adventure

Wow, a quirky PS action game and from Atlus... what a surprise. As an animal lover, I found *Concerto*'s characters very appealing but character design alone is not enough for me to purchase a game. I applaud Atlus for bringing out this unusual quest in the States, but I can't see U.S. gamers backing it (hmm, do I buy *Concerto* or *Soul Reaver*? Hmm...). And with *Thousand Arms* out (also Atlus), gamers will have a tough time not comparing the visuals.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 9 **84**

Wow, I find myself agreeing with ECM whole-heartedly—trust me this won't happen often. *Tail Concerto* is an odd game, but odd is a compliment in a world of cookie-cutter rip offs. Take the bait, Atlus is making strides in the right direction. *Guilty Gear*, *Thousand Arms* and *Tail Concerto*? I'm there with control in hand. Waffle's another character that's screaming for a return adventure on DC or PS2. Thumbs up Gale!

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 8 **90**

Yes! It's about time this game saw the light of day, and from the new masters of the quirky game... Atlus! While Fury and his animal-loving friends (it's not a healthy, platonic love, mind you) may question whether this game will find a home with U.S. gamers, I'd have to disagree and say that it'll find a sizable niche audience among Otaku everywhere. Even after a massive delay, the game looks good *and* feels fresh. And hey, any game where you can torment Reubus' cats...

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 9 **90**



Tail Concerto
PlayStation
Atlus
Adventure

Sorry EA, but the wrestling domain still belongs to THQ. *WCW* may try to mimic the play mechanics made popular by *WCW Revenge*, but it's nowhere near as polished. I can't say *WCW* is all bad because I have to admit to spending much time performing high flying attacks with "stars" like Rey Mysterio, Jr. Until the PlayStation sees a THQ-quality wrestler then you'll have to make due with EA's offering. A starving man will eat almost anything to survive...

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 6 O 5 **68**

I'm not a fan of modern wrestling games to begin with, so when a bad one comes my way, you know it's gonna die a horrible death... case in point, *Mayhem*. Taking the action backstage is mildly entertaining, as is the use of cattle prods and the Singapore cane. But once you get over these twisted novelties, you'll realize that this is a poorly-crafted wrestling game with bad control, graphics, and gameplay. What a combo!

G 6 C 5 P 5 M 6 O 7 **55**

All right, for the thousandth time I DO NOT like wrestling games. Sure, there was a time when I could look forward to titles such as this, but that day is long since past. The standard wrestling fare is in the offing for all that buy these insipid button-mashers year-in, year-out. I remember how people that played *SF2* used to mock the cro-magnons that would smash the buttons in these 'games' like it was a Whack-A-Mole machine... some things never change.

G 7 C 6 P 5 M 6 O 6 **60**



WCW Mayhem
PlayStation
EA
Wrestling



Harvest Moon

Nintendo 64
Natsume
RPG

8 8 9 7 10 — **93**

Yes, that's right, I like a farming RPG. So the pigs (well, cows), shuck the corn, get married, and have a good ol' time down on the prairie. It was interesting to see what a day-in-the-life of Shidoshi would be like, and I'm pleasantly surprised to see it wasn't half bad (though I was feeling a nasty drop in testosterone by mid-afternoon on the first day). Natsume proves that they can thrive with wacky little titles such as this. Now about *Pocky & Rocky*...



Harvest Moon brings back some of my fondest memories. Never have I been as fond of a system as I was with the Genesis. Natsume must've saved some of its 16-bit magic to sprinkle on this original N64 title. There's no blur-o-vision or bunk '3D' control; you're really going to wonder if you've gone through a time warp. Of course, the Tarzan-John' idea could potentially scare you away, but try to have an open mind. You won't regret it.

7 7 9 7 9 — **89**



Generally not an RPG fan, *Eternal Arcadia* and *Phantasy Star Online* excluded... can ya really blame me?), but I was very curious about this adventure title back at the E3. A farming simulation/RPG for the N64, and it's actually quite good. Sure it might be violence-free (perfect for a Nintendo console) and the cutesy graphics might deter a few players, but overall, Natsume has crafted the most unique N64 game in years. Put aside your need to kill and enjoy fresh veggies for a change.

7 8 8 7 10 — **85**



Resident Evil 2

Nintendo 64
Capcom
Survival Horror

9 8 8 7 7 — **80**

OK, this is cool... only it's *RE2* almost two years late. Listen, I can appreciate what Capcom is doing here, and what Nintendo wants here. A nice fat 512-meg cart (twice the size of *Zelda*) with extensive FMV effects (all of better graphics, and slightly upgraded control. Only problem is that it's still *RE2* two years late. <sigh>. Methinks it'll still sell truckloads, but why not *RE3* or, better yet, *Dino Crisis*? Living in fear of Sony must be a grand thing indeed.



Wow, lemme say it again, wow! *RE2* for the N64 has undergone some serious changes since I saw it last. Much of what I didn't like about this version has been fixed. I know the graphics getting way old to PlayStation owners, but if you don't have a PS you've got something to be happy about. You're giving up something in terms of background quality, but you gain it back in super-crisp characters and good FMV scenes. So buy now!

9 6 7 9 9 — **91**



I was hurt (emotionally) when I found out that Capcom's first N64 title was going to be a *Tetris* game starring Mickey Mouse. Finally, the big C delivers, and in proper form with *RE2*. In a nutshell, this is the PS version... maybe not pixel for pixel, but certainly darn close. What's important here though is the fact that *RE2* will no doubt help push the N64's maturity envelope. And who knows what's next... *Silent Hill 64*, anyone?

9 7 9 9 5 — **90**



Virtua Fighter 3tb

Dreamcast
Sega
Fighting

7 10 9 8 9 — **89**

If you flip to Eggo's in-mag review of *VF3tb*, you'll see exactly how I feel. While the game is still utterly engrossing from a gameplay point-of-view, the graphics are getting old. While the game wowed and amazed at the Import launch, the game is decidedly middle-of-the-road now. And if *Soul Calibur* and *Power Stone* hadn't come along, I'd be rating this game much higher. Still it's an amazing game, that loses just a little in light of the newcomers.



Ouch, AM2's first fighter didn't age gracefully. I used to play this game in the cooperative words being 'used to.' Next to the visual beauty of games like *Power Stone* and *Soul Calibur* (I never said it wasn't pretty!), *VF3* looks like Keith Richards after his stint with certain substances. Gameplay is VF through and through, but half a decade later I'm not really sure anyone cares. Everyone's moved onto other fighters, maybe you should, too.

7 8 6 7 6 — **75**



Genki?! This awesome rendition of Yu Suzuki's *VF3tb* was developed by the people behind *Kileak The Blood*? I guess they hired a few new guns around the Genki office cause *VF3tb* is sooo very close to being arcade perfect. I myself am perfectly happy with the DC rev and pose a simple question to our devoted readers—would you have rather Yu Suzuki took the time porting *VF3tb* perfectly to the DC or spent that time developing *Shen Mue*?

9 8 6 7 7 — **88**



Bangaio

Nintendo 64 (Import)
ESP
Shooting

8 8 9 8 9 — **93**

OK, it's not quite *Radiant Silvergun*, but it is Treasure. Couple that with some sweet gameplay, sprites on N64, and this Treasure twist (combos taken to another level), and you have the best shooter since *RS*. The game starts out laughably easy at first, but that's only to get you accustomed to the controls, which are a bit unconventional. And don't listen to the mangy mutt to the right, *Bangaio*'s music is good, especially for N64.



Great game—bad, bad music. Treasure seems to be a sleeper-hit factory. Each of the smell developer's games has had something special to it... Add *Bangaio* to the list of *Gunstar Heroes*, *Alien Soldier*, and *Radiant Silvergun*. I really wish there was a two-player mode somewhere in here, but no luck. As is, I'd gladly play its 50+ stages to death. Wait until you perform the *Last Starfighter*-like attack—it's boss. So, howza 'bout that DC version?

7 9 8 0 8 — **90**



Sprites on N64? Yes please! *Bangaio* is definitely one of Treasure's more unique titles and to be perfectly honest, its extremely addicting. I'll admit to being a bit disappointed at first, expecting more *RadiantSilvergun*-like experience. But *Bangaio* has the heart of a great shooter and the gameplay is downright strange... Why do I have to endure these cute little cities again? With only 10,000 copies available, I'd suggest searching eBay.

8 9 8 6 10 — **92**



Macross VF-X2

PlayStation (Import)
Bandai
Flight Simulation

5 4 3 6 7 — **40**

"No, no, Mommy, don't make me play *VF-X* anymore! I promise I'll be good, and I'll never ever pour salt on slugs, pull the wings off butterflies or pick on Shidoshi's decidedly lacking manhood." <Whew!> It was all a bad dream—for a second there I thought games could actually be that poor. Nothing like a really amazing license attached to the most broken engine ever, expressly to sell some games. Hell, you mean it was n't a dream?! "NOOOOOOO!!!!"



I came into this wary, because everyone had told me how bad *VF-X2* was, and I'm a big *Macross* fan. I spent more five minutes after picking up the controller, and I was screaming incredulously, "WHAT! This is ALL you do? Surely ye jest!" Nay, the joke's only on those poor unfortunates who forked over hard cash for this one without knowing any better. Guess *Macross* fans will have to settle for *Omega Boost* and vivid imaginations...

7 8 4 1 7 — **42**



Macross VF-X2 would have been a nice game had it come out in the first six months of the PS's release. Games like this severely trouble me—how in the world could anyone green-light such a poorly crafted title? Wait a sec, we are talking about Sony here... *Irritating Stick*, anyone? Mech games like this simply can't compete with the likes of *Omega Boost*, and that wasn't so great in the first place. I have hopes for the PS2, let's pray lightning doesn't strike twice!

4 5 6 6 6 — **45**



Toukon Retsuden 4

Dreamcast (Import)
Sega
Wrestling

7 7 5 5 5 — **60**

Did you catch my VP on *WCW Mayhem* from above? Good, cause you've heard the last from before (a regular star on ECM's most hated gaming genres list). While the *PS TR* games were stunning in their day, this is something else entirely. It's as if Yukes just gave up and didn't even bother trying to make a decent game. Sega's *Giant Gram* stomps all over this game, and I didn't even think much of that title. Perhaps this will mark a mainstream vocation for the genre—but I doubt it.



Ugh, it's games like this that remind me once again why I don't like wrestling games these days. That fun factor and sweet gameplay of greats like *Mat Mania* and *WWF Superstars* is just not there with modern wrestling games. Well, maybe the import *Fireproo G Wrestling* on PS, but so far the two DC offerings leave much to be desired. *Giant Gram* is better than this, and that's not saying much. Maybe American developers will have better luck.

7 6 5 6 6 — **57**



I expected more from a wrestling title on the DC. *Toukon Retsuden 4* doesn't even compare to *WWF 2000* on the N64. I need my wrestling games to be fun, and that involves not having to memorize a dictionary size move list. DC owners would be better served taking a trip to their local import shop and buying *Giant Gram*. The bottom line is that *TR4* animates poorly, the moves are a pain to pull off, and it's a wrestling game... oops.

7 6 6 5 5 — **60**

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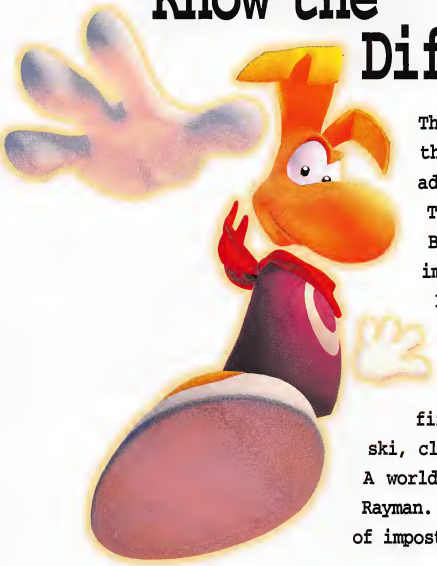


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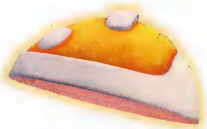


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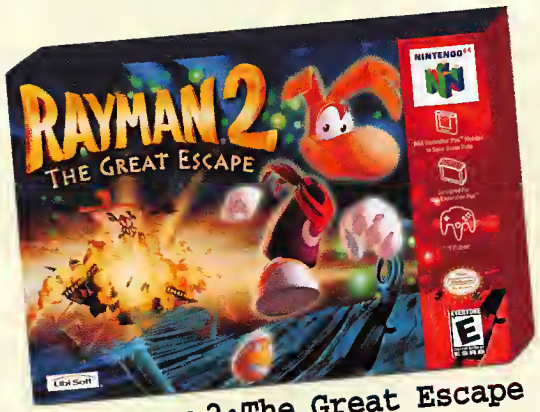
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A. Rayman 2: The Great Escape



B. Ray: The Great

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4. _____
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1.A; 2.A; 3.A; 4.A



Ubi Soft ENTERTAINMENT

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

CD-ROM WINDOWS 95

NINTENDO 64

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The Law of Diminishing Returns applies not only to economics, but video games as well. The most apparent example of this theory can be found in Nintendo and Rare's very own *Donkey Kong Country* series; the original breathed new life into the fading SNES, but those two follow-ups were painful, with their cookie-cutter graphics and repetitive gameplay. Had we not already shelled out 50 bones for *DKC*? I think the least we could ask for, from Rare particularly, was something new.

Well, it's taken them long enough, but Rare is finally ready to deliver you a new romp with the thrilla gorilla and his simian posse, but is it really that new? It's easy to make comparisons to *Banjo-Kazooie* when you gander at these screenshots because, well, they sure look similar. And, after all, *DK64* is another 3D platformer, a genre that the N64 has sewn up. What can Rare do to make this different than *B-K*, or *Super Mario 64* for that matter? Bring along some companions, that's what.



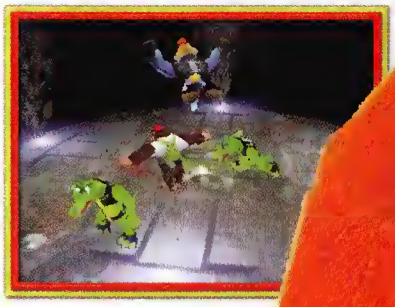
Donkey and Diddy aren't alone in their battle against King K. Rool and his army of evil Kremlings. Joining forces with our favorite knuckle-draggers are some never-before-seen apes. First out of the cage is Chunky Kong, with his super-simian strength. Chunky is armed with a pineapple gun that pelts Kremlings with enough vitamin C to cure scurvy. Tiny Kong, who bears more than a passing resemblance to Dixie, makes the scene with her feather crossbow and every intention on tickling the nasty crocs to death. Finally, there's the laugh-inducing Lanky Kong. Lanky is a spot-on send-up of King Louie from *The Jungle Book* and is easily the game's scene-stealer.



DONKEY KONG 64

PREVIEW	The Sixth Man: Can Rare Kong-quer the Nintendo 64?	Developer - Rare	1-4 Players
		Publisher - Nintendo	Available Nov. 22





Rare is poised to deliver the N64's best 3D platformer ever.











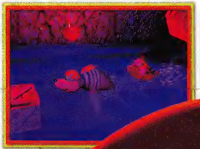
Lanky lumbers from place to place and uses his elongated arms to give Kremlings a hairy knuckle sandwich. Will too many Kongs spoil the soup? Had each Kong had his or her own adventure, maybe not, but as it stands, it is a little disappointing to find out that each Kong will simply be traversing the same ground as the other apes, except using their special powers to reach new ledges or open locked doors.

The goal of the game, other than to defeat the crocodile king's minions, is to find bananas... a lot of bananas. Each character must find as many peels as possible to journey on to later levels and earn new skills. Bananas may open doors, but it's the golden bananas that really keep the adventure going. Golden bananas are awarded for finishing off bosses and completing tasks.

In addition to finding bananas, you must also track down pieces of the blueprints for King K. Rool's diabolical secret weapon. Return the blueprint shreds to a friendly weasel (if there is such as thing), and he will help you combat the tyrant's evil machine.

It goes without saying that the game is absolutely enormous... come on, this is a Rare title. According to Nintendo's own Ken Lobb, this game is, geometry-wise, bigger than *Zelda*. That means very little in terms of fun, but we can confirm that this is quite possibly the largest 3D platformer in town, even bigger than *Jet Force Gemini*, and that was a very expansive game. Spanning eight unique worlds, Kong and Co. will travel deep into the jungle (natch), the ruins of an ancient civilization, and many other commonplace video game locations.

Of course, in a gimmick that is quickly becoming Rare's trademark, you won't be able to see all of the eight worlds without the help of all five Kongs. It will require the use of everybody's respective talents to unlock new areas. Will this keep your interest, though?







Knowing that as soon as you find Lanky, you're just going to have to backtrack over roads that you already traveled with Donkey, just to open a gate? It will take a lot of patience and stamina to complete this game, since after a mere six hours with it, I completed a mere four percent. Count on devoting at least 60 hours of your life to battling King K. Rool if you want to see the entire game.

Trust me, though, there are definitely reasons to keep playing. Little mini-games hidden throughout *DK64* add longevity to a title that could potentially become monotonous, especially the inclusion of the original *Donkey Kong* game—the one that ate your quarters up, oh so many years ago. It was a nice touch to make a nod at the game's phenomenal heritage. Other great mini-games include a wild mine cart ride (...and you expected?), racing games, and blasting the monkeys out of barrels in the sky.

The Kongs won't be facing these evil Kremlings empty-handed, though. In *DK64*, the simians finally get to put their opposable thumbs to good use and pick up upgradable





DK64 promises a solid mix of adventure and puzzle solving.





HAPPY BIRTHDAY DONKEY KONG!

Donkey's 20th anniversary approaches at a feverish pace. It's hard to believe that the big ape been around almost as long as *Pac-Man*. That's a whole lot of bananas. *Donkey Kong* saved Nintendo from almost certain bankruptcy. According to industry lore, President of NOA, Minoru Arakawa ordered 3,000 units of *Radarscope*. Less than a third were sold and Nintendo was left with a ton of PCB cabinets and no funds. Under the supervision of the late Gunpei Yokoi, a young Shigeru Miyamoto was to make Nintendo's next arcade game. A hit was necessary to stay in the black. The team came up with *Donkey Kong*, a game that pitted a plumber named Mario against a huge gorilla named Donkey Kong. *DK* even caused MGM to file suit against Nintendo. Yeah, *DK* wasn't always the good guy (ape?). Fact of the matter is that he wasn't a very nice monkey; that's not how Shigeru Miyamoto saw him, anyway.







weaponry to use against the snapping crocodiles. Once you earn your weapon from Funky Kong (complete with combat boots), you can later return to him to have it powered-up. By the end of the game, you'll be packing not-so-primitive artillery such as homing coconuts and feather blasters. Previous *DK* outings were fun because you didn't have the crutch of shooting far away targets, you had to use your noggin—and Donkey's, too—to beat the Kremlings. Hopefully, the addition of these weapons won't disrupt the balance of the game too much. I'd hate to see the great ape's latest romp reduced to a third-person shooter.

Not only will you be blasting the marauding reptiles with *Gilligen's Island*-style firepower, but you'll be soothing the savage beasts with sweet music. In addition to finding weapons, each Kong must also rediscover their musical roots and uncover their own special musical instrument. Donkey has a set of drums to lay down the jungle beat, and Diddy's guitar is sure to make the Kremlings' ears bleed.







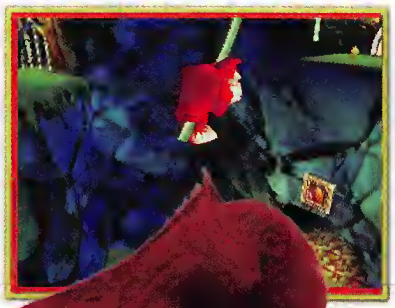
Donkey Kong - 1981

You'll be hard-pressed to find someone who considered himself a hard-core gamer who hasn't played *Donkey Kong*. For its time, *Donkey Kong* introduced a lot of play mechanics that had never been seen before. Then again, it was 1981, and not much had been seen in the way of revolutionary gameplay. DK had kidnapped Pauline and it was Mario's job to save his beauty. As Mario made his way to her, the massive primate would throw everything except the kitchen sink at him. Fireballs, crates, barrels, pies—Donkey wanted to keep Pauline for himself. And miraculously, DK would somehow get Pauline back every time that Mario was about to 'save' her. Most of my weekends consisted of mastering *Donkey Kong* and finding the elusive pie factory. *Donkey Kong* was the beginning of Nintendo's nearly invincible empire.











Playing music at the appropriate times will open doors and allow you to find more bananas for our favorite ape.

However, when it comes to squaring off against the Kremlings, you're going to need more than fancy firepower. You're going to need your smarts, especially when you're only one gorilla against an army of angry beavers, vicious bees, and snapping crocs. Many Kremlings require more than one hit, and others will attack in several forms. One croc may be offed by a single bop to the chops, but his gnashing teeth will chase after you until you give him a five-fingered root canal. Bosses are classic Rare; they take up the entire screen. Prepare to throw down with the likes of a raging armadillo, strapped to the max with cannons or a giant lizard that won't stop until it's tanned your hide with the fires of a violent volcano.

The production values of *DK64* always go for the laughs. Everything in *DK* has an offbeat flavor, but nowhere is it more apparent than in the door guards. Remember how all you had to do to open doors in *Banjo-Kazooie* was find musical notes and then pass through? Now you have to collect bananas and then feed them to a mammoth hippo. As the hippo gains weight, it raises a pig into the air that will unlock the door. It's surreal to say the least, and funny, to say the most.



Donkey Kong Jr. - 1982

I guess you can't keep a good plumber down because Mario must've caught DK between *Donkey Kong* and *Donkey Kong Jr.* Now, it's Junior's job to free his imprisoned dad from the clutches of Mario. Gameplay changed drastically from its 1981 roots. Instead of jumping platforms and scaling ladders, Junior had to climb vines, run from electrical currents, and leap over moving bearings, all the while avoiding pesky enemies like birds and such. Junior could climb like no other, but he didn't really have any hammers. What DKJ did retain from his daddy was that he just couldn't stop Mario. Each time Daddy was set free, Mario would trap him yet again. The difficulty definitely took a sharp spike for the better in *Donkey Kong Jr.*, as the first stage alone tested your ninja-skills.











While *Donkey Kong 64* sports some of the best graphics on the N64, it requires the goose of the Expansion Pak to make them happen. *DK64* will not play without those four extra megabytes of memory. Nintendo has decided to pack the Pak in with the cart so everybody has a chance to rally the Kongs and charge King K. Rool's evil lair. The Expansion Pak, though, does not provide high-res graphics as it has with previous games such as *Turok 2* and *Rogue Squadron*. Instead, Rare is using the extra memory to not only beef up the quality of the textures and characters, but to make the worlds even larger than they had originally planned. It's refreshing to see somebody use the Expansion Pak for something other than graphical enhancements—to affect gameplay.

The single player game is probably massive enough to warrant a purchase, so the incredible multi-player modes are simply gravy. Deathmatches pit ape against ape on giant battlefields, battling it out with special weapons. The real fun, though, comes in the single platform fights that play like *Super Smash Bros.* with monkeys. Plug in four controllers and duke it out on an arena, frantically trying to knock the other players off the edge of the platform. Your couch will become alive with laughter.

Donkey Kong is a game that was begging to be Darwin-ized on the N64. Was the evolution successful? The preview version I played was definitely entertaining and I'm curious to play more, but will it sustain players' interest long enough for them to complete it? Remember, a lot of players abandoned *Banjo* midway through the game, because it just got to be too much... Too many Jinjos. Too many feathers. Hopefully, when *Donkey Kong 64* appears in stores on November 22, we will once again realize that Rare is a company that has earned the right to pound its chest. Chances are good that this holiday season, Earth will definitely become the planet of the apes... at least for a little while. Check back soon for the full review. **6**

Donkey Kong 3 - 1984

Where Mario went during *DK3* remains a mystery. Stanley the Bugman's first appearance was sadly his last. Call me a heathen, but I preferred the shooter-like gameplay of *DK3* to the previous games in the series. I guess DK had a penchant for the flowers in Stanley's greenhouse. The poor fellow had his hands full between a slow moving Donkey Kong and a swarm of pests straight out of *Galaga*. With bug spray in hand, Stanley faced DK and his bug buddies; and on occasion Mario's stand-in would use a DDT bottle to spray some big-time whoop-ass. *DK3* was a real departure from *DK* and *DKJ*. Because of that, the game probably didn't do as well as Mr. Arakawa would have hoped. Say a prayer for Stanley... maybe he landed a job with Orkin.



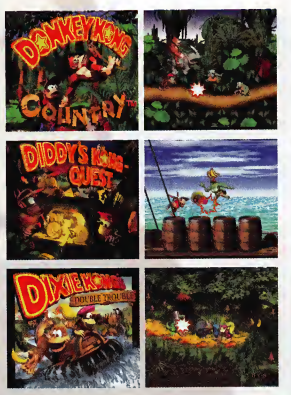
Donkey Kong Country Series

Leave it to Rare to turn our 3.58Mhz SNES into a mini Indigo... SGI, anyone? Audio-visually, *DKC* was a trip no one was prepared for. Sure, we'd seen rendered sprites in stuff like *Sonic 3*, but who would've thought we'd see full levels and characters with such blazing colors and crisp definition? Rare's symphonic musical score received much acclaim and even found itself available on CD c/o Nintendo. In addition to picking up the game, I also bought the soundtrack. Nintendo's strict quality control was another reason why *DKC* was fun. And you know as well as I do that too many games look nice, but don't have the gameplay to match their looks. *DKC* introduced Donkey Kong's young sidekick, Diddy Kong. The duo blasted their way through Kremlin-infested areas with moves we had never seen or imagined DK could do. The wild supporting cast of characters also kept the game lively.

DKC wasn't the end of the line for the Stamper brothers. Having tasted success with that game, Nintendo and Rare teamed up for another *DK*-fest. History loves repeating itself (nothing better to do), and that's exactly what happened in *DKC2: Diddy's Kong Quest*. Diddy Kong would enlist Dixie Kong to retrieve DK. The two lovebirds set out on another journey that was much better than the first.

And where there's a part two there's always a part three... *Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie's Double Trouble* had our leading lady saving Donkey Kong and Diddy Kong—OK, this wasn't original anymore... And guess what? *DKC3* had a new sidekick by the name of Kiddy Kong. While not as revolutionary as the first two games, *DKC3* still packed the fun we had seen in the other two.

Now we're up to four *DKCs* on console... Rare's pushing the envelope once again with a packed-in RAM Pak. It should be fun, it always is. Next month we'll give you the usual straight answers you've come to expect from the *GF* crew...



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NINTENDO 64

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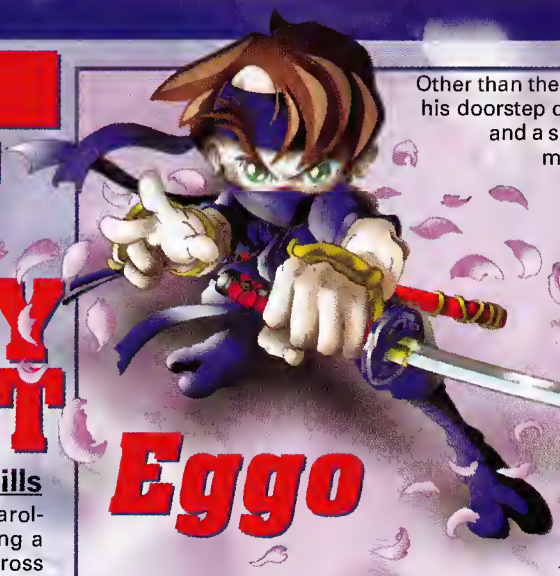
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GF HOLIDAY WISHLIST

Christmas Time in Woodland Hills

It's that time of the year—when snow falls, carolers sing, and poor Fury walks around holding a mistletoe above his head... to no avail. Across the country, many a wide-eyed little Timmy tugs on Mommy's hand and points at that orange swirl asking for "one of those" this holiday season. But what about the group of ninja gamers, huddled around the campfire in the cave in Woodland Hills? Since they already own every video game known to man (and even some that aren't... oh, the wonders of eBay!), the question remains, "What do you get a member of Team GameFan this holiday season?" Well, since we know this is the burning question which keeps you up at night (and, in the interest of filling space), we proudly present our first (and last) ever Holiday Wish List!



Eggo

Other than the obvious (a hot, married woman on his doorstep dressed in nothing but a red ribbon and a smile), Eggo's holiday would be a lot merrier if he got... *Drunken Master II* on DVD, Miss August from the Midway *Blitz* calendar, a Sid Meier's *Pirates* game on Dreamcast or PS2, a fan letter from a girl expressing her undying love for him... who wasn't 16, a new pair of rollerblades, a date with that E3 booth babe, a domestic release of *Final Fantasy IV* on PlayStation, someone to cos-play Rydia for him (in adult form, preferably), everybody to play *Monster Rancher 2* at least once, and for the citizens of L.A. to pass a law forbidding the use of cell phones while driving.

But since he knows all those wishes will remain just that, Eggo would be more than happy with a single dream coming true: for Ubi Soft to release that 2D *Rayman 2*! I know the code's still there. It's gotta be!!! AGGGHHHH!!!

Fury

Ahh, the holidays are here yet again. And while snow falls outside the cave, Fury's household celebrates with eight wondrous nights. Now that's eight chances for Fury's parents to get it right... "Wow, flannel socks... again... Thanks Mom!" This year I'm hoping Hanukkah Harry picks up this issue and sees my meager holiday wishlist. Topping things off would be a portable Sony mini-disc player (blue, like ECM's), complete with a stack of blank discs so I can record Kodomo's Britney Spears collection. Next, I'd love to find my PC Engine LT A/C adapter, as I've been dying to play my recently purchased eBay copy of *Strip Fighter*. But what celebration would be complete without games? *Yu Yu Hakusho* on Mega Drive and *McDonalds Treasure Land* and *Light Crusader* on Genesis. There's nothing better than finding Treasure in your... uhh, Hanukkah stocking. I wonder if I can count those as a single gift? I'd also love for someone to pay the $50 late fee I acquired at Blockbuster, after forgetting a copy of Fred Savage's *The Wizard* underneath the passenger-side seat of my car. Well, I guess that's about it for my Christmas wish list, though I'm always game if someone out there wants to send their old buddy Fury a copy of *The Matrix*, *12 Monkeys*, *Casino*, *Aliens*, *Starship Troopers* and *Total Recall* on DVD. Happy Holidays!

ECM



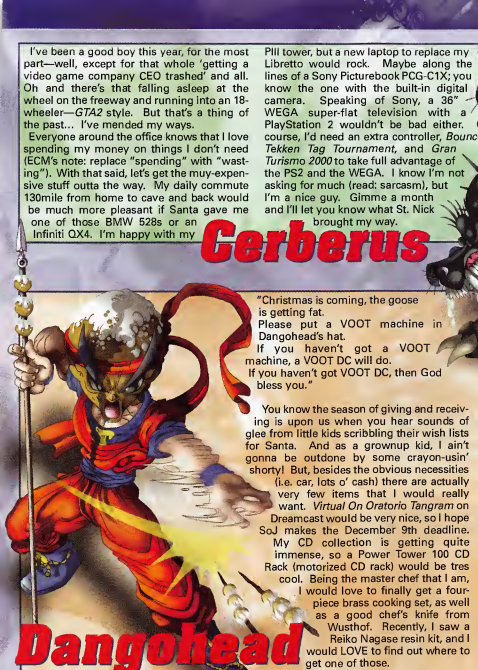
Ah, Christmas...that warm, sunny time of year when all the Southern Californians bundle up in long-sleeved Polo shirts and wear socks with their sandals to stave off the "frigidly cold" sub-70 degree weather. That time of year when ECM pines for the Northeast and its sub-zero climes, reminiscing of days spent bundled up in a parka and Eggo-supplied dog-hide gloves—praying to the almighty that he's stored enough food to see him through till the following June (and one month of actual summer weather). It's also the time of year that I get to have all my friends and relatives pick me up the certain something(s) that I missed during the year on one of my mad shopping binges (an eBay addiction coupled with daily trips to the mall make ECM a less-than-solvent boy).

So what's on my list this year? Well, I got the DVD player, Mini-Disc player and domestic Dreamcast, so I'm a little short on the things I desperately 'need' (hey, in my world, food is for the weak). But if I had to choose anything, I guess it'd be peace, happiness and good will to all men... and a nice shiny new Honda S2K and a bitchin' condo. Of course, considering that this stuff may be out of the reach of most of the people close to me, I figure I'll have to settle for the couple of action figures I'm missing (still praying for those Chakan figures, SSJ4!); griffin-riding in *EverQuest* (OK, I'll settle for horses, <grumble>); a car, home and some respect for Dangohead; a trip to the proctologist for Cerberus; and a nuke to be delivered to the address of each and every regular poster to Usenet (hey, at least I'm giving them a quick, painless exit from their senseless existence); and to ALL you game developers—load times in your pre-final revs that don't resemble the Jurassic Era in length.

Cerberus

I've been a good boy this year, for the most part—well, except for that whole 'getting a video game company CEO trashed' and all. Oh and there's that falling asleep at the wheel on the freeway and running into an 18-wheeler—*GT42* style. But that's a thing of the past... I've mended my ways.

Everyone around the office knows that I love spending my money on things I don't need (ECM's note: replace "spending" with "wasting"). With that said, let's get the muy-expensive stuff outta the way. My daily commute 130mile from home to cave and back would be much more pleasant if Santa gave me one of those BMW 528s or an Infiniti QX4. I'm happy with my P!!! tower, but a new laptop to replace my Libretto would rock. Maybe along the lines of a Sony Picturebook PCG-C1X; you know the one with the built-in digital camera. Speaking of Sony, a 36" WEGA super-flat television with a PlayStation 2 wouldn't be bad either. Of course, I'd need an extra controller, *Bouncer*, *Tekken Tag Tournament*, and *Gran Turismo 2000* to take full advantage of the PS2 and the WEGA. I know I'm not asking for much (read: sarcasm), but I'm a nice guy. Gimme a month and I'll let you know what St. Nick brought my way.



Dangohead

"Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat.
Please put a VOOT machine in Dangohead's hat.
If you haven't got a VOOT machine, a VOOT DC will do.
If you haven't got VOOT DC, then God bless you."

You know the season of giving and receiving is upon us when you hear sounds of glee from little kids scribbling their wish lists for Santa. And as a grownup kid, I ain't gonna be outdone by some crayon-usin' shorty! But, besides the obvious necessities (i.e. car, lots o' cash) there are actually very few items that I would really want. *Virtual On Oratorio Tangram* on Dreamcast would be very nice, so I hope SoJ makes the December 9th deadline. My CD collection is getting quite immense, so a Power Tower 100 CD Rack (motorized CD rack) would be tres cool. Being the master chef that I am, I would love to finally get a four-piece brass cooking set, as well as a good chef's knife from Wusthof. Recently, I saw a Reiko Nagase resin kit, and I would LOVE to find out where to get one of those.

Since it's the season of giving as well, I don't forget the great team I'm lucky to work with. So if I could, I would probably get Eggo a new Arrowana to replace the one he threw out to sea. I would get Fury new rims for his Prelude since he can't color coordinate well. ECM is hard to shop for, but I would probably get him a Terry Bogard-like cap so he can live out his fantasy of being a pizza-delivery boy, and finally, I would get Cerberus something completely useless that costs a ton of money. Merry Xmas to all!

The Judge

It's that time of year again... a time when The Judge likes to sit in front of the fire in his red leather chair and reflect on the past year with feet up and brandy in hand. A time when good will towards your fellow man and mistletoe abound; a time of office parties and Xeroxed derrieres. The Holidays are a good time in the eyes of The Judge.

Now let's cut to the chase: What stuff do I want Ol' St. Nick to bring me? The Judge is not a greedy man and would be satisfied with only a few basic gifts. Let's start with a Russian mail-order bride (preferably from the Kamchatka region) and a case of Stoli. Then I'd like a mini-mall on every street corner in France, complete with a McDonalds and Starbucks. It is important that each mall blare Britney Spears songs on the outside speakers at all times.

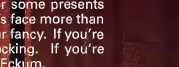
Moving on, I hope that come Christmas morning I will get a written guarantee from Pepsi that they will discontinue the ad campaign featuring that annoying little Curly Sue wannabe. She needs to go away... forever. I would also like to see an updated Sid Meier's *Pirates!*, *Rampart*, and *Shadowrun* under the tree. Since we're on the topic of games, I would also like to see announcements of an online RPG using either the Cthulhu or Gamma World license.

That's it; if The Judge found even a fraction of this list come Christmas morn, he would be a happy man.

It's that time of the year when Eckum (as we affectionately call him around the cave), Eggo, Dango, Fury, and myself round up our dusty Christmas stockings and wait for some presents from St. Nick (Hanukkah Harry if you're Fury). Nothing lights up a game junkie's face more than goodies for his system. Herewith are some nifty items that might just strike your fancy. If you're a nice little boy or girl, Santa could leave a gift under your tree or in a stocking. If you're naughty you'll get either a lump of coal or a visit from an angry dwarf named Eckum.

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GF Peripheral Vision



PlayStation Cases



Coming in at the top of our list in non-game-related junk are the colored PlayStation cases. Available in clear, blue, black, green, and red, these cases match the Sony memory cards and Dual Shocks perfectly. Most any specialty shop should stock most if not all the colors. Be warned that not all shops offer installation on this bad boy, and if they do it'll be another $5-10 on top of the cost. As a do-it-yourself/do-it-for-less deal, it's not overly difficult, but if it's your first time it won't be quick. It won't take you as long as it takes Dango to get a date, but that's another story... Admittedly, a PlayStation case won't make your PS handle more polygons, but it'll look pretty. Look how cool the PlayStation set looks in blue and clear.

Perfect for: Your PlayStation, duh! Get it: at an import or specialty shop. It'll cost ya: around $20.

Agetec Dreamcast Arcade Stick



Don't ask why Sega changed a good thing (the Saturn 6-button pad), but Eggo's still in tears. The standard issue Dreamcast pad just doesn't cut it for fighting games and isn't even half as good as its Saturn counterpart. Agetec's Arcade Stick is just what a gamer needs to play 'Man's style.' The stick and all six DC buttons are spaced just right on a heavy-duty face. Modeled after Japanese arcade sticks, the joystick is short in length with a ball at the top. Buttons are magnetic, allowing even the average gamer to hit buttons as fast as the almighty Dangonator.

Perfect for: *Marvel vs. Capcom, Street Fighter Alpha 3, Power Stone, Virtua Fighter 3tb,* and *Soul Calibur.* Get it: anywhere a Dreamcast is sold. It'll cost ya: $50.

VMU (Visual Memory Unit)

How can you expect to save all those glorious stats in *NFL2K* without a VMU? Without a VMU you'll never see Super Sonic. No VMU means all of *Soul Calibur*'s hidden goodies will be hidden forever. Sega's Visual Memory Unit is a cool idea that could really take off. Though Sega underestimated the possibilities here, the current VMU will likely pave the way for something more. Maybe the next incarnation will have improved resolution and memory capacity. Either way the VMU remains an essential peripheral for the Dreamcast enthusiast.

Perfect for: Everything, you name it. Get it: anywhere a Dreamcast is sold. It'll cost ya: around $25.

Memory Cards/PocketStation (Import)

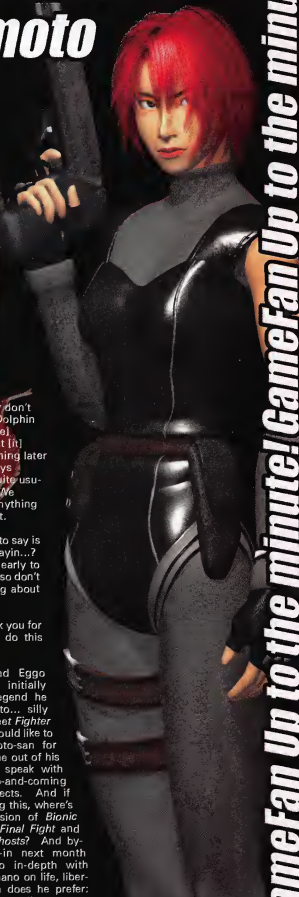
If the Dex Drive isn't a possibility because either 1) you don't have a PC or 2) you don't want to fiddle with the Dexplorer, then you're left with more conventional save methods. But if you have to buy memory cards, you might as well get some with style. Sony has an entire line-up of colored Memory Cards for the color-coordinated conscience. But if you're really cool, like Eggo and Cerberus, you'll hunt down a Pocket Station. Standard saving isn't what makes the Pocket Station so cool—it's all the other stuff it can do. Games like *Final Fantasy VIII, Street Fighter Alpha 3, Monster Farm 2* (import), *Crash 3* (import), and *Spyro* (import) all have mini-games you can upload to your PDA. Even better are some of the non-game-related saves which enable the PocketStation to work as a Sony brand remote. You don't know how much fun Eggo and Cerb have had messing with everyone around the office, turning off their TVs at key moments...



Perfect for: game saves. Get it: at most import shops. It'll cost ya: around $20-60.



Exclusive Interview with Yoshiki Okamoto



At the grand opening of Yoshitaka Amano's (character designer on the first six *Final Fantasy* titles) HERO exhibit in New York, *GameFan* bumped into Yoshiki Okamoto (a.k.a. Gaming God), infamous game designer and President of Flagship. Perhaps you may not know his name, but you must know his work. Originally at Konami, he made the arcade games *Time Pilot* and *Gyruss*. Then he left Konami and joined Capcom, where he worked on *Bargus, Sonson, 1942, 1943, Gunsmoke, Sidearms*, and a couple titles known as <drum roll please> *Final Fight* and *Street Fighter 2*. Can you say "Da Man?" So without further ado, here's *GameFan's* exclusive interview with Yoshiki Okamoto.

GF: I spoke with Yoshitaka Amano earlier, and I had asked him what he was doing for next-generation consoles, like PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast... 'cause it's rumored that he's working on games for them. And he said I should talk to the people walking around here, the Capcom representatives. So I'm wondering if you can provide any details on any upcoming video games.

YO: You wanna ask about anything with Yoshitaka Amano or PSX or next-generation consoles? Sure. Just come up with questions.

GF: Can you tell me more about the game that Mr. Amano is working on?

YO: We have one game planned—this role-playing game—basically like a Japanese role-playing game... not like a U.S.A. role-playing game. And we asked Mr. Amano for about 600 character designs. And one role-playing game scenario will take only four hours to finish on one CD ROM... or one ROM will contain three scenarios, and those ROMS might be published every month. So three scenarios in a ROM every month [for this] role-playing game.

GF: Is this for PlayStation or PlayStation 2?

YO: Dreamcast.

GF: Oh wow! Umm, are there any other Dreamcast titles in development other than *BioHazard: Code Veronica*?

YO: You are talking about original [titles]?

GF: Yes.

YO: Well because we are doing arcade games too, there's port from arcade to NAOMI boards to Dreamcast, but if you're asking about Dreamcast original games, we don't have [any]...

GF: What about PlayStation 2? Any original titles?

YO: About six titles.

GF: Really... can you give me any details on any of them?

YO: *Onimusha*, do you know *Onimusha*?

GF: Yes. Are there any plans to port it to PlayStation?

YO: [It's] especially for PS2.

GF: Didn't it start out as a PlayStation game at first?

YO: We did plan the graphics for PSX, but actually we were planning for PSX2 from the beginning.

GF: Any other titles you can tell me about?

YO: *Dino Crisis 3*... We are thinking about *Dino Crisis*.

GF: Three, you said?!

YO: Yes.

GF: ...for PlayStation 2 ...but does that mean that *Dino Crisis 2* is already in the works?

YO: PlayStation 1.

GF: Do you know when we can expect that? A release date for *Dino Crisis*?

YO: Which one, PSX or PSX 2?

GF: *Dino Crisis 2*.

YO: Japan next summer... 2000.

GF: OK. Will there be any Capcom launch titles with PSX2?

YO: Uhh, [at] this time, that's all I can talk about...

GF: Umm... is there anything else you can tell me about *Onimusha*? Like a release date or anyone famous working on it, other than you?

YO: We are shooting for end of next year, Christmas 2000 in Japan. Do you know of international movie star [Takeshi] Kaneshiro? He's really famous in Japan and Taiwan and Hong Kong and Asian fields, and he's the gameplay designer too, and he joined the team.

GF: Are there any plans to develop for Nintendo's Dolphin?

YO: We really don't know about Dolphin yet, but [we're] expecting that [it] maybe launching later than we always expected. Quite usually... yeah. We don't know anything about that yet.

GF: Too early to say is what you're sayin...?

YO: Yeah too early to say, and we also don't know anything about those yet.

GF: Well thank you for your time to do this interview.

GameFan and Eggo (who didn't initially realize the legend he was talking to... silly Eggo, no *Street Fighter* for a week) would like to thank Okamoto-san for taking the time out of his carousing to speak with us about up-and-coming Capcom projects. And if you're reading this, where's our new version of *Bionic Commando, Final Fight* and *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*? And by-the-by, tune-in next month when we go in-depth with Yoshitaka Amano on life, liberty and which does he prefer: paintbrush or pencil.

GameFan Up to the minute! GameFan Up to the minute!

PlayStation

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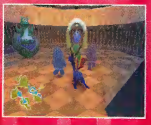
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RESIDENT EVIL 3™

NEMESIS









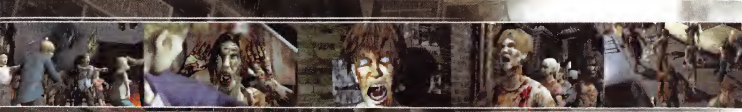
Back when *Resident Evil* first came out on PlayStation, I was impressed that Capcom was capable of doing more than just *Street Fighter* on PlayStation. Now, *Resident Evil* is a near-household name, assuming you live in a house with life's essentials: a well-stocked fridge or phone (for delivery), an S-video TV, and a video game console. At first, *RE* had humble beginnings, being just an ordinary PlayStation game... but then it took on a life of its own as the "Survival Horror" genre grew and grew, swelling until finally exploding like a soda can left forgotten in the freezer. Now we're standing in the aftermath of that giant explosion, staring up as the glut of undead bits rains down around us... games like *Deep Fear*, *Blue Stinger*, and *Carrier*. Even Capcom, never one to let a hot franchise remain idle, has churned out the *Resident Evil* titles faster than you can say "Champion Edition": *RE: Directors Cut*, *RE2*, *RE3: Nemesis*, *RE2 N64*, *RE Game Boy*, and the dreamy *RE: Code Veronica*. It's a wonder that any game can survive the horrors of this crowded genre, but if any company can make one that's worthy, it's Capcom—the ones who spawned it to begin with.

It's been almost two years since I last wandered the zombie-filled streets of Raccoon City on the PlayStation, and not much has changed since then. The town is still in need of some serious fire-extinguishing and animal control. And those moaning zombies have been eating their Wheaties, because they continue to grow stronger with every outing ("Ha! I laugh at your puny pocketknife!"). The town itself remains mostly unchanged. The RPD is right where we left it, and even the rooms inside look much like they did in *Resident Evil 2*. Maybe that's because this game takes place right before *RE2*, and shortly after *RE1*.

At first I was dismayed to see the same pre-rendered backgrounds of the RPD which were used in *RE2*. But thankfully, that's only at the beginning of this game, and Capcom did not just recycle *RE2* by slapping a "3" on it (this was an actual fear of mine). As you play, Jill explores the streets of Raccoon City, something which *RE2* started to do, but then opted not to as the adventure took to the sewers and labs. Well, the first half of *RE3* takes place almost exclusively on the streets of the city... and it's not a happy place. Doors are boarded up, storefronts are smashed, and cars are abandoned... fires rage uncontrollably while broken fire-hydrants spew their precious contents skywards (by the way, those are some of the best fire and water effects on PlayStation). In short, Raccoon City is a disaster area. If the opening cinema




Humans are
such easy prey...







In any gauge, the city is under martial law, and the military has been called in. But even these "trained professionals" can't do anything about the waves of oncoming undead flesh, as they end up only adding to their numbers. It's into this rotting mass of gangrenous flesh that our heroine steps as *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* begins.

Our heartbreakin' heroine Jill Valentine returns to the zombie-ridden streets of Raccoon City. Is it because she wants to solve the riddles of the Umbrella conspiracy and rid the video game world of those pesky zombies once and for all? No! She left behind her favorite outfit: the blue top and black mini. "Omigosh, what am I gonna wear tonight?! Brad! Turn the helicopter around... we gotta go back!" And just like that, Lady Valentine returns to the fray, only this time she's ready to party (and she's certainly dressed for it)!

Let's talk graphics. Other than the aforementioned fire and water effects, this game is a carbon copy of *Resident Evil 2*. The pre-rendered backgrounds and polygonal characters are just what you'd expect, bearing the exact same look and feel as *Nemesis*' predecessor. OK, there might be a tad more going on in the backgrounds now, like an extra dead body hangin' out a window here and there. But if a person who never finished *RE2* were shown a screenshot of this game, he'd be hard-pressed to tell if it's *RE2* or *3*—that's how similar the games are visually.





Gameplay-wise, it's also "more of the same." The zombies still outnumber your bullets, so running and fighting smart are essential, as is the fine art of zombie dodging/baiting. Those who've mastered these skills in previous installments will feel at home instantly, picking up the controller and evading the undead with the utmost of ease. But if you're new to scrambling for your life, be warned that this game can be difficult for first-timers. Once getting over the initial hump, however, even rookie S.T.A.R.S. members will be passing by shattering windows and outstretched zombie arms without so much as a flinch.



Resident Evil games have always had a puzzle element. This category was noticeably more pronounced in the original, while the sequel was dumbed down to Neanderthal levels—"Ook! Round Medallion goes in circular hole." Fortunately, *RE3* is more like the original than the sequel in that aspect, which is a good thing. Because after a long day's work of zombie mulching, there's nothing I like better than relaxing in the La-Z-boy and solving a particularly vicious mind-bender (yes, I'm being serious). Think about it, the thrill of painting walls with zombie parts gets old eventually, right? And all that juicy violence can be mind-numbing, so a few puzzles thrown in to exercise the ol' noodle are a welcome thing. There's even a puzzle in *Nemesis* which I had to stumble my way through, similar to the lab door entrance code in *RE1*—don't ask me how I did it, but put me in front of that same puzzle, and I can probably duplicate my Houdini-feat again... eventually.















While the brainteasers have taken a turn for the better, the rest of the gameplay remains mostly unchanged. Why muck with a winning formula, right? Well, a bit more innovation would've been welcome, but alas, this is what we get: plot choices, a few new moves, and ammo-manufacturing. At key points in the game, the screen will turn white and the action will freeze. Then, you'll be given two choices of what to do, like a Choose Your Own Adventure book. Your choice affects the events to follow, and this is how you get the different endings in the game.

Much like Crash or Lara returning for a sequel, Jill has been working in the off-season and has learned a few new moves. She now has a Regina-like, about-face maneuver, spinning around instantly by holding back and hitting a button. But more importantly, she's picked up a nifty dodge move. She can tuck and roll in a somersault. Just keep the right shoulder button (the one used to aim your weapon) depressed when you're being attacked, and Jill will avoid the attack. Considering you should usually have your gun drawn anyway, this often leads to unexpected narrow-escapes. So while you may not have planned it, this move scores style points and saves some hits... I'm not complaining.

The final 'innovation' this game brings to the series is the ability to make your own ammo. Throughout the game, Jill collects different types of Gunpowder (A and B). Using a new reloading tool, you manufacture your own handgun bullets, shotgun shells, grenade rounds, magnum rounds, etc. Of course, the two types of Gunpowder can also be combined multiple times to end up with ammunition for the magnum or grenade launcher, because handgun bullets just don't cut it in the later game. Also, if you continue to produce the same type of ammunition over and over, your skill in that area will increase, leading to greater returns. Hey, since manufacturing costs are going down, in the next game maybe you can open Jill's Gun Shop since I hear Tony's not doin' so well these days...

In the end, it all comes down to this... *RE3* is a lot closer to *RE2* than *RE2* was to *RE1*. If you liked the second adventure and wouldn't mind a lil' more of the same, then you'll enjoy *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*. Personally, I don't mind another romp through Raccoon City. This is easily one of the best series on PlayStation; and next to *Monster Rancher 2* and all those RPGs, this is next on my PlayStation Christmas list.

Eggo constantly dodges zombies every morning... co-workers who played a lil' too much EverQuest the night before.

VIEWPOINT SCORE • 92	DEVELOPER - CAPCOM	1 PLAYER	EGGO: BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN...
	PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	AVAILABLE NOV. 11	

GRANDIA





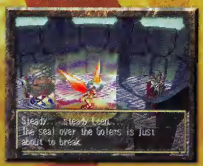


When it comes to Japanese RPGs of the traditional sort, I've never been the biggest fan. To this day, no Japanese-created RPG has ever captured my imagination like *Ultima IV* and Vom Commodore 64 (the best 'game console' I ever owned). While I love *Final Fantasy 2* and *Lunar: Eternal Blue*, they're about the only two that I can look back upon as near-religious experiences. That all changed, however, upon the release of Game Arts' *Grandia*. While I understood nary a word (and had to rely on numerous other sources for the story and dialog—friends, FAQs, etc.), I was completely swept away for approximately two weeks of my life. What was it about this game—completely in a foreign language—that made it so utterly and completely special; so entirely different that I could overlook for the first (and probably, last) time, voluminous amounts of nigh-incomprehensible text? Was it the aesthetic masterwork of its incredible environs, music, and artistry? Was it the amazing story, while diluted by layers of abstraction, that won my heart? Or was it something else; something completely different and heretofore unknown? I think the simple answer would be 'yes.'

Like the preview that I put together some months ago, this review is going to be a little different—much like *Grandia* itself. Instead of the standard recitation of story line, characters, plot points, etc., I'm going to try something a little atypical. A little not so run-of-the-mill. I'm going to try to give you an idea of the experience that is *Grandia*. I'll gauge success by whether or not I can convince you to buy it (if you needed any to begin with) or maybe give you a slightly greater appreciation for what exactly we have here. If I fail, it's not for a lack of trying.

While Square moves inexorably in one direction (far away from the confines of the classic RPG that made them the company they are today), Game Arts took a slightly different tack. Instead of setting out to create a heady atmosphere, replete with over-







bearing, tortuous good vs. evil themes (i.e. clichéd), and standard cookie-cutter heroes and villains, *GA* created something that I referred to long ago in the Saturn review as a more whimsical game. Something that's a little askew from what we may all be accustomed to (something Atlus did admirably with *Thousand Arms*).

I think it's key to note that in no point during this game do you have this dark, overly depressing, completely overwrought feeling of doom and gloom. If you need that in your games, well, you've probably already stopped reading and gone back to whatever it is that makes you feel 'happy.' And I suppose that's the key to *Grandia*: an overwhelming feeling of happiness... and perhaps even a little joy (figured that word's been out of circulation long enough for it to mean something again).

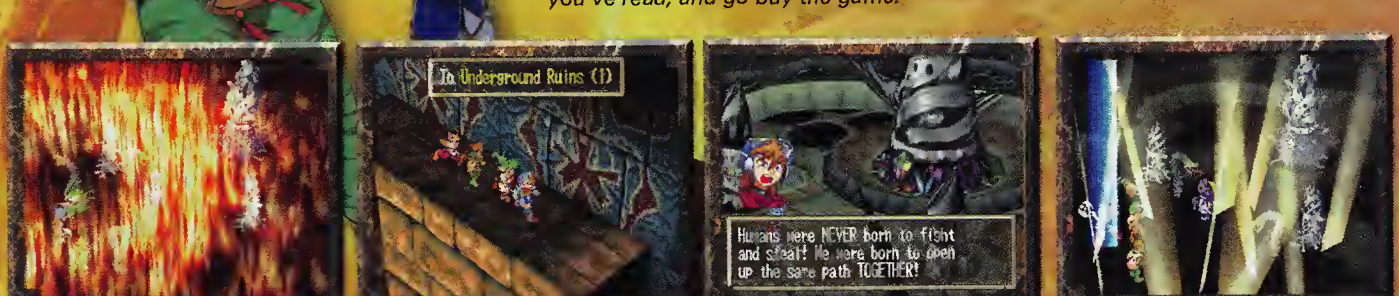
As the story progresses, you'll play witness to a canvas colored in deep, vivid, primary colors, instead of the usual, drab grays and sullen earth tones that pervade today's RPGs. There will be no deep introspection; no questions about life or death; and certainly no doubt as to whether these heroes are out to save the world or to simply have a great time. Leave behind any stodgy preconceived notions, because you'll find nothing to harbor them in here.

By now you've taken a glance at the score this game has earned in my eyes; and many of you may even be a bit shocked.

See, when I initially reviewed this game way back when, it earned a 'mere' 98. So how on earth did it manage the same score, when even a fool could see that it's inferior to the masterpiece that the Saturn version was? I guess it's quite simple, really. Despite not being a completely accurate port of its forebear, it has the distinct advantage of being in English. Amazing how much more you can appreciate a story (despite what might be lost in the transition, as something always is) when it's in your native tongue. Imagine that ;)

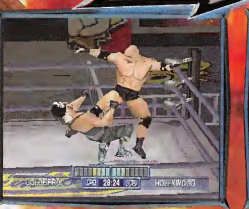
And if this 'review' has come off as a bit elitist or a tad 'out there,' I'd be fairly happy in the knowledge that at least someone out there 'got it'—as with this review, *Grandia* is not paint by the numbers. And for those of you that do 'get it,' well, enjoy one of the happiest weeks of your life.

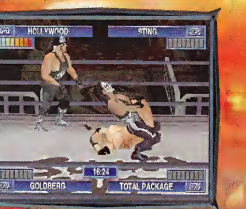
ECM says, "This is the moment where you put down the magazine, absorb what you've read, and go buy the game."

















Believe it or not, there was a time when wrestling games, like fighting games, were a rarity. True fans of the 'sport' were not content with the few titles (mostly by Acclaim) that surfaced each year. Import shops became a wrestling purist's best friend, stocking the hottest titles from overseas: *Toukon Retsuden*, *All Japan Pro* and *Fire Pro Wrestling*. However, 1999 will see the release of more than nine wrestling titles, spanning three series on three consoles: *WWF Attitude*, *Wrestlemania 2000* and *WCW Mayhem*. Is this a positive omen... or a sign of the apocalypse?

Only seconds after loading *Mayhem* into my PlayStation, I was shocked to see an adrenaline-soaked intro that any wrestling fanatic would happily lose bladder control over. Instead of just compiling live clips from WCW events (wow, what pretty FMV), the developers actually rendered a sci-fi opener in the vein of *The Running Man*. Different, but definitely awesome!

Mayhem follows the basic wrestling game formula that includes all the standard modes of play: a Rumble-style elimination, handicapped play, four corners battle, and tag team/single-player matches. Gamers also have the option to create their own wrestlers, though categories like hair color and clothing seem a bit lacking in variety.

Unique to the *Mayhem* series is the ability to coax competitors into fighting backstage. The action then picks up through the view of a security camera. Weapons such as pipes and folding chairs are scattered around the ground and include everything but the kitchen sink... wait, I'm sorry, you can use that too!

While *Mayhem*'s gameplay is extremely easy-to-pick-up, the graphics are not that flashy. Colors are dull, and the crowd is comprised of a single lifeless texture. What happened to audience interaction? How cool would it be if players could bust into the stands and deliver a beating to annoying hecklers? "Ya see what I did to your dad, son? Don't force my hand again!"

Keeping up with the ever-changing storylines in pro wrestling will give any sane developer a year-long migraine. When *Mayhem* was in the earlier stages of development, Hogan was last seen donning his Hollywood Hogan attire. But now, fans will have to cope with a few minor discrepancies in the game's story, as Hogan has now reverted back to his original Hulk Hogan likeness (a minor flaw in an otherwise quality title).

With the near-constant onslaught of wrestling games being released, fans finally have the option to pick and choose rather than settling for a few meager titles each year. *WCW Mayhem* might just give THQ and Acclaim a run for their money in '99.

Fury is recovering nicely at a Woodland Hills hospital after mistaking Goldberg for Stone Cold Steve Austin... 3:16 man 3; <wack!> arr 16.

R REVIEW	FURY: CREATINE WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS...	DEVELOPER - KODIAK	1-4 PLAYERS	VIEWPOINT SCORE 80
		PUBLISHER - ELECTRONIC ARTS	AVAILABLE NOW	















CTR
CRASH TEAM RACING

When was the last time you played a really good video game? I'm not talking about whether it runs at a constant 60 FPS, has lighting effects up the wazoo, or is polygonal or sprite-based. Fun... that's what I'm getting at here, folks. Break a game down to its most basic level and then ask yourself "How much fun am I really having?" I promise you, pick up a copy of Naughty Dog's *CTR: Crash Team Racing*, give it a spin for an hour, and ask yourself that question again... I guarantee your response will be more than favorable.

In all honesty, *CTR* is no different than *Mario Kart 64* or *Diddy Kong Racing*. Considering that both titles were excellent cart racers, I only hoped that *CTR* could possibly replicate a bit of that—dare I say it—Nintendo 'in-house magic.' Miyamoto would certainly be proud!

First off, few PlayStation games look this good. *CTR* constantly reminds me of an N64 cart juiced up with the RAM Pak. It's simply that amazing looking... sad that nearly every other PS title (with the exception of *Tekken 3*, comparison. Hopefully the PlayStation 2 will make it easier for developers (without Naughty Dog's huge budget) to recognize their vision, free of graphical compromises.

CTR features eight playable characters taken directly from the *Crash Bandicoot* world. A bunch more are hidden throughout the game, and as you conquer certain levels, they become available for play. Crash, like Mario in *Mario Kart 64*, is the easiest racer to get accustomed to. As you begin to develop skill (for me, it's a work in progress), you'll eventually settle on the racer who best suits your need. For example, Cerberus, notorious for his "Thug Tactics" play style, prefers a tighter handling character like Pura. As he nears a sharp turn littered with power-up crates, he'll affectionately drop Nitro boxes and potions, causing me to live up to my name as I lash out in an uncontrollable barrage of frothing four letter words.

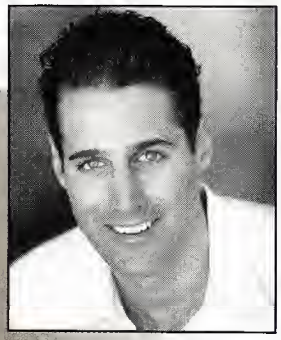
Amazingly, both the single-player and multi-player game in *CTR* run at a constant 30 frames, even in 4-player mode! Taking into account the insane level design and constant action on-screen, this is unheard of for a PS game.

Few people have logged as many hours as I have in *Mario Kart 64* and *Diddy Kong Racing*, and the fact that I am so enamored with this game after playing virtually the same thing for the past couple years is a testament to how fun *CTR* is. Sadly, *CTR* is the last Crash-related game being developed by Naughty Dog... one final spin on the battle-scarred PlayStation by a great developer.

Fury wanted to race go-carts as a kid, but instead his parents sent him to Hebrew School.

VIEWPOINT SCORE • 96	DEVELOPER - NAUGHTY DOG	1-4 PLAYERS	FURY: BANDICOOTS MAKE FOR SOME TASTY ROADKILL!
	PUBLISHER - SCEA	NOW	

Jason Rubin of NAUGHTY DOG



GameFan interviews the daddy of PlayStation's most-loved mascot. Top Naughty Dog, Jason Rubin speaks about his final PlayStation game and first for the PlayStation 2.

GF: Can you give us your background as far as games you've worked on etc.?

JR: Naughty Dog has made 9 games: *SkiCrazed* (Apple II), *Dream Zone* (Apple II GS, Amiga, Atari ST, PC), *Keef The Thief* (Apple II GS, Amiga, Atari ST, PC), *Rings of Power* (Genesis), *Way of the Warrior* (3DO), *Crash Bandicoot* (PS), *Crash Bandicoot 2: Cortex Strikes Back* (PS), *Crash Bandicoot: Warped* (PS), and now *CTR: Crash Team Racing* (PS).

Before *Crash Bandicoot*, Naughty Dog consisted of Andy Gavin, programmer, and Jason Rubin, artist. The games were made with exactly two people while we were in high school, college, and graduate school. That, of course, explains the sudden jump in quality seen between *Way of the Warrior* (two people—budget $80,000), and *Crash Bandicoot* (eight people—budget $2,000,000).

There are now 23 Dogs, still focused on a single project at a time. We are approaching 16 million PlayStation games sold worldwide. Obviously, the focus is paying off!



GF: Who designed *Crash* and how did you go about the design process for the character?

JR: *Crash Bandicoot* was designed by the Naughty Dogs present at the time and two cartoon designers: Charles Zembillas and Joe Pearson. Basically, we came up with ideas, they came up with ideas, and then we bred the sketches together. Then we took the best ideas of these new sketches and bred them together. Four months, and dozens of sketches later, we had Crash.

GF: Was *Crash Bandicoot* setup as a universe (characters, enemies, environments) or was everything done as you went?

JR: Naughty Dog and the designers sketched an overview of every level, and most of the creatures for the first *Crash Bandicoot* game before we began making the game. By the time we started working on *Crash 3*, we were sketching thumbnails of the backgrounds as we went, and created the enemies on the fly. After six years of making *Crash* games, we have become very versed in the *Crash* universe; it is our second home.



GF: When did you decide to do *CTR* and where did the idea come from?

JR: Naughty Dog wanted to do a racing game starting just after the beginning of *Crash 2*. After all, our two favorite genres are Action and Racing. But we had so many things that we wanted to do with the *Crash* engine, that we ended up making *Crash 3* at the same time we were working on early R&D for the *CTR* engine. *Crash 3* finalized the *Crash* action games for us. There was nothing more we felt we needed to do. *CTR* was the logical next step for us. Luckily, the engine was ready just about the same time that *Crash 3* finished. The artists began January 6th of this year. Eight months later, we are nearly beta.

GF: Please give us a rundown on the story or reason for the *Crash* races.

JR: There is an alien named N. Oxide that has come to the earth and challenged the world to a race. In order to choose who will race against N. Oxide, all of the best racers on the planet meet in a series of races to determine who is the best. If that racer can beat N. Oxide then he will leave the earth alone. If not, he plans to pave the entire planet. That basically is the plot of the Adventure mode. All of the other modes, Arcade, Vs, Time Trial, Battle, are all practice races, held to prepare the racers for competition.

GF: What were your main influences when creating a Kart racer?

JR: Obviously, we were influenced by *Mario Kart*, mostly the 16-bit version. But we also looked to *Mario Kart* for ways to improve the genre. As we watched people play *Mario Kart*, we noticed that the way most people play is to get a death-lock on the gas, and then simply steer. We wanted a more challenging, frantic game, so we created a turbo system that keeps the player more involved in driving the kart. Every time there is a bump, the player needs to hop at the top, because the longer the player is in the air, the bigger a turbo he/she will get when they land. And around corners, the player needs to hop into a power-slide to keep himself/herself from losing speed. Further, the player can get three turbos out of the power-slide if they know what they are doing. And this system allows for chaining. A well executed turn, getting all three turbos in the power-slide, sets the player up to jump even higher than they might have on the bump just after the corner. This, of course, gets a bigger turbo boost, which sets the player up for the next bump, etc.

In the end, a good player of *CTR* is using his fingers like crazy, and the kart is sliding all over the track and jumping WAY into the air. The gameplay is, therefore, like a cross between *VS. Excitebike* and *Mario Kart*. After playing *CTR*, we found it hard to go back to *Mario Kart*, because there is then a feeling that there is not as much to do. So we feel like we have fulfilled our obligation to improve.

GF: If you had to pinpoint what you think will draw players towards CTR, aside from the characters, what would it be?

JR: The engine in *CTR* is, we feel, the best free-roaming 3D engine on the PlayStation. The environments are huge and open, and there is neither pop-in, fog, or gouraud in the background, nor big pixels and stretching in the foreground. The fact that we are doing a TON of stuff to make the engine keep moving is completely invisible to the player, and as a result, the visuals are, we have been told, some of the best on the system. I chalk this up to our programmers' six years of PlayStation development. I think that each new track is another reason to keep playing.

In addition, we have made the game as full featured as we could, to give the most gameplay for the gamer's dollar. There is a full frame-rate in two, three, and four player mode, a battle mode, the adventure mode (with trophy races, time box races, boss races, and crystal searches), time trial mode, a fully customizable battle mode, arcade mode, 15 playable characters, 18 tracks, and seven battle mode arenas. The game is huge.

GF: Anything from Crash games that has been ported over?

JR: Yes, the rain effect. Other than that, the engine is entirely new from the ground up.



GF: How did you decide which weapons to keep and their uses?

JR: All of the weapons in *CTR* come from previous games. There are Nitro and TNT boxes, N. Brio's vials, N. Gin's missiles, N. Tropy's time warp ball, bombs from the Jet-ski levels in *Crash 3*, N. Cortex's shield, Aku Aku and Uka Uka, etc.

GF: How long has your development cycle been?

JR: The engine coding began in May of 1998, so it will be about an 18-month code cycle. The artists began in the beginning of January, so they will have worked nine months when we are through.

GF: What was your biggest challenge in developing the game?

JR: Our goal was to create the best 3D engine of 1999, and to make it capable of doing a proper 4-player mode as well. To do both of those tasks at the same time took a good three months of exploration and forethought. Suffice it to say that our first PlayStation 2 title, which we have begun working on, will use a descendant of the *CTR* engine.

GF: The Jump Turbo trick is a new innovation to kart racers. How did you come up with it?

JR: The two new types of turbo that the players can get in CTR were an answer to what we saw as a flaw in the *Mario Kart* gameplay mechanic. We wanted to challenge the player to continually be working to speed themselves up. The "hang-time turbo" and "power-slide turbos" were an answer to this. Because of these new turbos, we have made the tracks bumpier, and more winding, than *Mario Kart's* tracks. The end result is a game that can be played on two levels: drive, and drive fast. We hope that most players will try to drive fast, which will require them to ask the question: "How do I best attack this next corner and the bumps after it?"

GameFan would like to thank Jason and Wendy for making this interview possible. We'd also like to wish Naughty Dog the best of luck with its first PlayStation 2 game. Watch these pages for more Naughty info.







Having had nearly two weeks to play *Spyro 2*, the following conversation took place in Cerberus' multiple minds:

3) "I love this game!"

2) "RAAAAAARRGGGHHHHH... Not I! I don't! I don't! I don't! Cerberus not like!"

3) "C'mon, this ain't that bad, guys!"

1) "Cerberus don't like, Cerberus don't Iiiiiiiike! Headache have I!"

The three personalities proceeded to beat each other to a pulp... And once the dust settled, the jury wasn't only out, it was out for the count.

Okay, all joking aside, I still don't know what to make of Insomniac's third excursion on the PlayStation. As luck would have it, *Spyro 2* has the makings of a well-polished gem, just like the ones the little fire-breather collects. But wait, in addition to the stuff dreams are made of, Spyro's second adventure has some of that stuff of which nightmares are crafted.

As is common practice, lemme 'git' the bad out of the way first; "bad" namely being the camera and anything related as such. Let me put it in layman's terms for you. Let's say the camera in *Spyro 2* was run by a little man inside the PlayStation. If that man were a member of the *GameFan* staff, he'd be yours truly because that little man is asleep at the wheel. There's so much to like about *Spyro 2*... just not the camera. I can't tell you how many times I found myself cursing at the 'bunk' camera angles. I had to adjust to all the spinning and guess where I'd be jumping. More often than not, or at least half the time, Spyro's facing the camera head-on. Two modes are available, passive and active, but neither can keep up with our purple dragon. And I know, the shoulder buttons parmit you to rotate the camera, but they don't do it at a respectable rate.

Yes, I hate the cameras, but not even a narcoleptic camera man can bring a good game down—well, not all the way down. I think too many 3D platform/adventures lack enough things to do or kill. I could mention a dozen or so that are guilty of this. But not *Spyro*, not a minute went by that I didn't know where to go or what to do. Whether you're in a hockey mini-game or battling one of Ripto's cronies, you'll have fun, even if you don't want to. Beyond that, Spyro and the gang have more personality and charm than even I do! (ECM's Note: <sigh>) I played Spyro expecting a dumbed-down game for kids, that it's not. It may have that winsome appeal that we saw so much of from Uncle Walt, but that never stopped you from watching *Beauty & the Beast*, did it?

Cerberus thinks Spyro should have his own toy line and cartoon, but Cerberus also likes disco and regularly dyes his hair so don't take anything he says too seriously...









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REVIEW	CERBERUS: SPYRO THE MAGIC DRAGON, LIVED BY THE SEA...	DEVELOPER - INSOMNIAC	1 PLAYER	VIEWPOINT SCORE •90
		PUBLISHER - SCEA	AVAILABLE NOW	

PlayStation

ARMY MEN™ AIR ATTACK™













You can almost hear the Wagner trumpeting in the background. Those plastic flyboys of the green army are gearing up to rain death on those tan tyrants. Once again, the cast of soldiers from the wildly popular game series (and many boyhood adventures of my own) are back, melting, blasting, and crushing each other in a never ending war.

The phenomenon that is the *Army Men* franchise is more than a little puzzling to me. Nostalgia aside, none of these games has catered to the hard-core gamer, instead gaining their popularity amongst the same crowd that finds *Deer Hunter* a real hoot. None so far have been able to hold my attention for more than a minute or two. *Air Attack*, surprisingly, breaks this pattern for me by offering up some good, ol' fashioned mindless action.

I like to think of *Army Men: Air Attack* as a *Strike* game with training wheels. In almost all aspects, *AM:AA* resembles *Strike*, from the camera angle and controls, to the graphics, mission styles, and basic strategies; it's just that it never reaches the level of difficulty that made games like *Desert Strike* and *Soviet Strike* so damn hard in the end (did anyone ever beat that last level of *Soviet Strike*? Man was that a pain in the ass...).

These similarities are what drew me to *AM:AA* and kept me playing longer than I probably should have. Flying my little green Huey on sortie after sortie never really got tired or frustrating because the action was non-stop, and it was fairly easy for me to avoid destruction. The missions are straightforward and require much less strategy than in a *Strike* title, so there wasn't as much trial and error to wade through.

Certainly the best-looking and controlling *Army Men* title to date, *AM:AA* will undoubtedly entertain many a gamer. Is it something worth purchasing if you're a seasoned vet of *Strike* or the type of gaming snob that scoffs at anything unless it looks like *Gran Turismo*? Probably not, but then again, those aren't the people that made the series popular to begin with.

The Judge knows exactly what that smell in the air is... No, not victory, but another one of Waka's microwave popcorn bags.



Viewpoint	Score	Developer	Publisher	1-2 Players	Available Now	The Judge:	Review
3D	80	3DO	3DO			Can I trade this horse for a chopper?	

PlayStation

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"The game is gorgeous." *- Game Informer*

"It's simply one of the most entertaining, pure arcade-style racing games out there." *- C/Net*

"...A very exciting, edge-of-your-seat racer that offers awesome graphics and a solid engine" *- videogames.com*

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"You may need a bucket of water handy to cool yourself down after playing." - *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

"The game's real life physics, gorgeous graphics and extensive track list make this one a must for racing fans." - *Cincinnati Enquirer*

"The graphics are so crisp and lush you'll feel as if you're riding in a simulator at a theme park!" - *Knoxville News-Sentinel*





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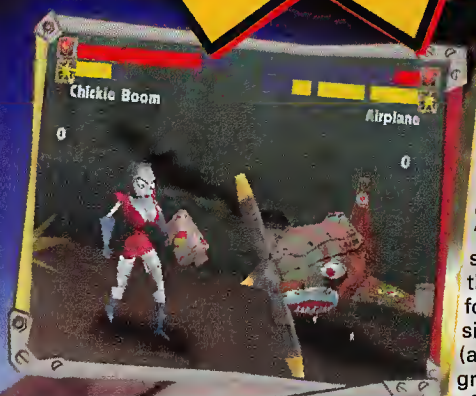
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BoomBots





Every once in a while, I'll have a discussion with a video game editor or developer, and I'll be enlightened about an older, incredible title which I'd never heard of before. After three months of working at *GameFan*, I had a nice sit-down with ECM (usually these begin with "You're fired! I hope the wax hands cart is still hiring..."), and we were talking about the glory days of the now-forgotten platformer. First we reminisced about the classics... *Sonic*, *Mario*, and *Bionic Commando* (arcade), and then we talked about the many great games that slipped through the cracks of mainstream success.

"*Skullmonkeys*—now that was an amazing game that nobody ever played. Blazing 2D madness at its best... and from an American developer no less," said ECM in a nostalgic tone, with a tear in his midget eye. Five minutes later, I was rummaging through Kid Fan's game collection, and thus began my fascination with Doug TenNapel's The Neverhood, as I played one of the best platformers ever.

For the past year and a half, TenNapel and company have been developing a fighting game... that's 3D. OK, I promise not to go into a full-on rant about why *BoomBots* should have been an insane 2D side-scroller like *Skullmonkeys*. Game sales in the U.S. have obviously proven that 2D is not a viable format any more (so much for a domestic release of *Hermie Hopperhead*). Instead, I'll talk about the humor and originality of *Boombots*, and why it sadly might be the Neverhood's final project.

Fully 3D fighters have either hit or missed in a big way. *Ehrgeiz* by Square EA was a decent attempt, but it lacked the hyper-intensity or weapon variety of *Power Stone* on the Dreamcast. Fortunately, the action in *BoomBots* is centered almost exclusively around projectiles. The concept is simple—avoid oncoming missiles and gunfire, while blasting your opponent to win. While this basic take on a fighting game might not







REVIEW

FURY: THEY DIDN'T HAVE BOOMBOTS LIKE THIS WHEN I WAS A KID...

DEVELOPER - NEVERHOOD
PUBLISHER - SOUTHPEAK

1-2 PLAYERS
AVAILABLE NOV. '99

VIEWPOINT SCORE • 88

Comic relief as only the Neverhood can deliver!

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If you're at all familiar with The Neverhood's previous titles, then you'll understand that *BoomBots* is a comedic fighter, first and foremost. The characters look like they've been taken straight from a Saturday morning cartoon, and after the game's released, I wouldn't be surprised to see *BoomBots* land a spot on Fox's animation block (TenNapel also worked as a co-writer and creator of the *Earthworm Jim* cartoon).

Ten zany fighters are selectable from the start, ranging from a converted WWII Spitfire BoomBot to a robotic French monkey named Le Chip. As players progress through the game, a number of hidden characters can also be unlocked. Werd! Klayman makes a return as a playable character, but unlocking him and the other fighters relies on going undefeated.

Wacky, hilarious and always unique, the story of *BoomBots* is nothing short of insanity. A distant planet populated by alien cats has come under attack by a treacherous band of extraterrestrial mice known as the United Rat Infestation Nation. Their plan is to steal all of Earth's housecats in order to repel the invading rodent scum. The problem is that the Earth, now feline-free, becomes vulnerable to an assault by the alien mice. Our top scientists now have only one option—the BoomBots, an experimental team of robot warriors and mankind's only hope for survival.

Each character comes equipped with three standard projectiles: a rapid-fire gun, homing rockets, and guided missiles that players can direct manually. Throws (or "grapples" as they're referred to in the game) also vary depending on the button combination, and they carry the same ridiculous humor as the rest of the game.

Like previous Neverhood titles, *BoomBots* treats players to some of the strangest and funniest claymation cinemas ever seen. As much as I'd love to describe them, I'd hate to ruin the surprise, as they're one of the game's coolest features... Let's just say that cat litter and a warped sense of humor go a long way.



Fury recently had the opportunity to visit the Neverhood in its final days and have a sit-down with one of the craziest and most creative designers in the games industry, Doug TenNapel.

GF: How do you feel *BoomBots* turned out?
DT: It really turned out different than I expected. It ended up being a much more unique game than I thought it'd be. To its credit it's probably the most unique game, gameplay-wise, that I've ever made.

GF: In what aspect do you find it unique?
DT: As a combat game, your hands and the way that you think end up being different than how I think and play other games. It's not derivative of anything else. It's not just a fighter... it has other elements... it's not just a shooter even though it has shooting elements. And like the best two players out there, you have to tailor your game to your opponent—to play them so you play each person differently.

GF: What was the most difficult part of developing *Boombots*?
DT: Definitely 3D... Well, I would say gameplay was even harder than that. 3D was the first thing we had to cross. We thought that was it, then gameplay came and smacked us in the face. It's really hard to do something unique, and you constantly wanna do what's already out there.

GF: Do you feel that it's a fair comparison: *Boombots* to *Power Stone*?
DT: I think so. *Power Stone* is another unique fighting game. You play it and you have to play it differently. Compared to all the *Tekken* and *Street Fighter* or *Virtua Fighter* rip-offs, *Power Stone*, I would say, is a lot like *Boombots* in that there's projectile elements and fighting elements and you're in a very small, enclosed area that forces you into conflict.

GF: Is there anything that you wanted to include that didn't make it into the game?
DT: Yeah, yeah, I would have liked to have seen more interaction with backgrounds. Like crawling into whole separate rooms. I would have liked to have gotten the poly count higher.

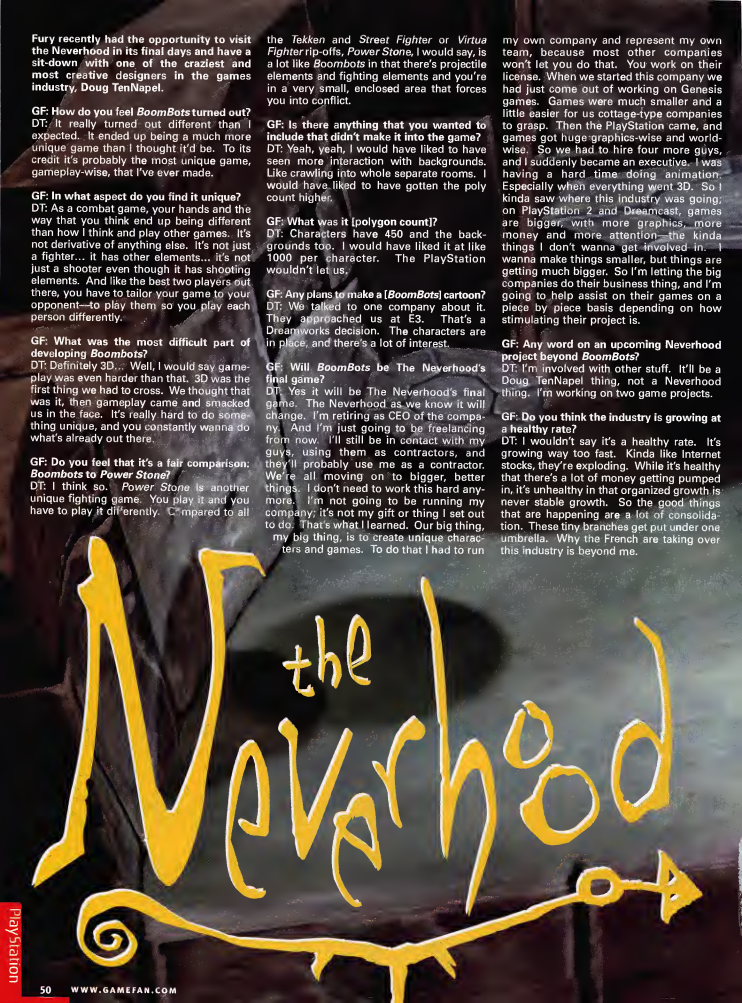
GF: What was it [polygon count]?
DT: Characters have 450 and the backgrounds too. I would have liked it at like 1000 per character. The PlayStation wouldn't let us.

GF: Any plans to make a [*BoomBots*] cartoon?
DT: We talked to one company about it. They approached us at E3. That's a Dreamworks decision. The characters are in place, and there's a lot of interest.

GF: Will *BoomBots* be The Neverhood's final game?
DT: Yes it will be The Neverhood's final game. The Neverhood as we know it will change. I'm retiring as CEO of the company. And I'm just going to be freelancing from now. I'll still be in contact with my guys, using them as contractors, and they'll probably use me as a contractor. We're all moving on to bigger, better things. I don't need to work this hard anymore. I'm not going to be running my company; it's not my gift or thing I set out to do. That's what I learned. Our big thing, my big thing, is to create unique characters and games. To do that I had to run my own company and represent my own team, because most other companies won't let you do that. You work on their license. When we started this company we had just come out of working on Genesis games. Games were much smaller and a little easier for us cottage-type companies to grasp. Then the PlayStation came, and games got huge graphics-wise and world-wise. So we had to hire four more guys, and I suddenly became an executive. I was having a hard time doing animation. Especially when everything went 3D. So I kinda saw where this industry was going; on PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast, games are bigger, with more graphics, more money and more attention—the kinda things I don't wanna get involved in. I wanna make things smaller, but things are getting much bigger. So I'm letting the big companies do their business thing, and I'm going to help assist on their games on a piece by piece basis depending on how stimulating their project is.

GF: Any word on an upcoming Neverhood project beyond *BoomBots*?
DT: I'm involved with other stuff. It'll be a Doug TenNapel thing, not a Neverhood thing. I'm working on two game projects.

GF: Do you think the industry is growing at a healthy rate?
DT: I wouldn't say it's a healthy rate. It's growing way too fast. Kinda like Internet stocks, they're exploding. While it's healthy that there's a lot of money getting pumped in, it's unhealthy in that organized growth is never stable growth. So the good things that are happening are a lot of consolidation. These tiny branches get put under one umbrella. Why the French are taking over this industry is beyond me.



GF: I'm with you there. If you could change one thing about the industry what would it be?
DT: The content—hands down. I would try to attract an adult, more mature audience and mature kids even. With more sophisticated content. The stuff's just low brow. I love a lipstick, bad-boy humor, but to have it be the foundation of an entire legitimate industry is really too bad, because we only attract an audience that likes that stuff and is there because that stuff sells. I mean games are ready for brands out front are that. The graphic sophistication is getting to a point where it doesn't take a lot of imagination to understand what's going on onscreen. Which means less imaginative people and a wider audience can start to understand what's going on with games now.

GF: So what do you think it's going to take for developers to take a chance on different types of games?
DT: I'm not sure what's it's going to take exactly 'cause I don't see a way out of here, but I'm sure that that evolution will take place, eventually. I'm not sure how. Right now the problem is that games cost so much to make for most companies, and the cost is going up—and for marketing them, too. That risk is huge. When you have that big of a risk you tend to not want to take chances... over-the-shoulder shotgun shoot-'em-ups... it's their right to do what game they wanna do. Artistically it's not what you want to do. But put a 2 or PS2 by it... you know.

GF: It's sad for me to see what happened to *The Neverhood*, because you were the guys that went out there on your own with a storyline and did what no one else would. With a tear in his eye>
DT: I don't see how something like *The Neverhood* will ever be done again. That's the most unique game I've ever worked on. I wouldn't even pitch a game like that again. Even the guys creating that are realizing it's suicide to do something that cool and different. I guess I should say The Neverhood is a game where the games will probably have to take smaller steps to do that. There's no reason why games have to be as copycat as they are.

GF: Kinda staying on that, is there any developer out there or any game that you see as being "out there" and totally unique? Any developer, up and coming, that we as editors should keep our eyes on?
DT: Well I think hands down it's Planet Moon—doing *Giants*. Right now they're the most unique team with the technical side along with their amazing ideas. Or a company like that.

GF: Were you a fan of Oddworld?
DT: It was okay... I thought Abe wasn't very appealing, but otherwise I thought the world's were really rich and I liked the puzzles.

GF: Your thoughts on the upcoming battle between Sony's PS2 and Nintendo's Dolphin?
DT: I put my money on Nintendo and I'll tell you why. I think they're going to come out with a *Mario 64*-type game—the killer app. A game that PlayStation never came out with for their system. That will decide it for me. They'll do something like that. Now, games are all about the worlds. Nintendo has the developers that can do the worlds. I liked *Zelda*; I liked *Mario 64* best of all. I hope they forge ahead. They're youthful—not as much into the blood and guts as the PlayStation.

GF: What would you say was the most exciting time in your career? And what was the most depressing time?
DT: Probably starting the Neverhood. Developing *BoomBots*. Watching, by going to E3 and starting to realize my sensibilities were getting farther and farther away from this industry. My gameplay sensibilities are that 'I like twitch'. I liked the adrenaline from gameplay. I don't like the adrenaline that comes from emotional content and that's where they're going to go with it. You've got a bunch of guys that are really bad at creating emotional content. No one here knows how to make a *Terms of Endearment*; no one here knows how to make a *Star Wars* for that matter—the emotion in that. We've got a bunch of guys that aren't really trained in telling stories trying to tell the story. They forsake the gameplay because anytime story comes into a game, it takes the place of the gameplay... So I still play *Robotron*. I'm sitting there playing that going, 'You know, this is pretty much where I got off.' I'm playing fun PC games like *Tiberian Sun*. Those are still real twitchy—I skip past the movies. That's what *BoomBots* is all about. It's the war between one player and the other. There's still cute movies in between, but that's not the game. It's about the versus element. I hope that, for the future of gaming, maybe with the network games, there'll be a lot more fun combat. I wish there wasn't so much pressure on developers when they do a two-player game to throw in a single-player game. It's really like having to do two games for the price of one. There should be two-player exclusive games. And maybe a one player version with a player against a machine. The idea of having an adventure mode, a two-player mode, race mode, and practice mode just take away from all aspects of that game. It'll be that much stronger.

GF: Who's been your biggest influence in the industry in developing games?
DT: I'd say probably Mike Dietz, our animator. Because as a game designer he really represents the audience we're trying to get which is fundamental gamers and he's also a great animator who taught me how to animate.

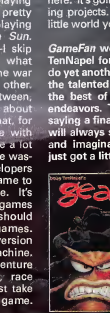
GF: Is there anything you wanna touch on?
DT: I'm genuinely excited about *BoomBots*. It got pulled together in a big way in the last months. We've been having a little internal tournament and things like that, trying to flesh out the weaknesses while tuning the game. I'm hoping the readers will search deep and often in the game to find those other layers of gameplay when you start mastering the secondary moves.

GF: When might we expect a new TenNapel project?
DT: Your guys will see my stuff... it's coming. The problem is that now that games take two years to make, it'll be a while before my next thing lands. I've got a couple of things coming; the graphics abilities of all my stuff is coming out better.

GF: Any chance for a return of Klaymen?
DT: Probably not. I don't like doing sequels. You can look for my stuff on TVs and movies. That's my big push this fall. That's what I'm moving on to full-time. I'd like to tell your readers about my website: www.tennapel.com

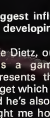
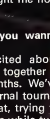
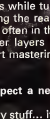
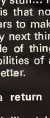
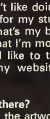
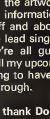
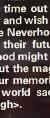
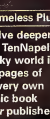
GF: What can they find there?
DT: It's going to have all the artwork I've done on stuff and information about it. Mothman stuff and about my band, *Truck*. I'm the lead singer. Ed does guitars. They're all guys here. It's going to have all my upcoming projects. We're trying to have a little world you can go through.

GameFan **would like to thank Doug TenNapel for taking the time out to do yet another interview and wish all the talented folks at The Neverhood the best of luck in all their future endeavors. The Neverhood might be saying a final farewell but the magic will always survive in our memories and imagination... the world sadly just got a little duller <sigh>.**



Shameless Plug

Delve deeper into TenNapel's wacky world in the pages of his very own comic book *Gear* published by FIREMAN PRESS LTD.











DUNE 2000

While I will maintain till my dying day that Tecnosoft invented the RTS (real-time strategy) genre with *Herzog Zwei* (the once and future master shall return, I swear it!), I am willing to admit that Westwood brought it to the mainstream (you know, the sheep—Eggo and Cerberus for instance). Beginning with the original *Dune* on PC (with a superior rev sometime later on Genesis) and moving on to the amazing *Command & Conquer* series on PC (as well as PS, SS, and a much-belated release on N64), Westwood studios made the RTS an everyday genre. Rivaled in popularity only by first-person shooters on the PC and spawning a legion of clones, hangers-on, and wannabes, Westwood rode the A-train of success, quickly becoming the crown jewel in Virgin's then-solid PC kingdom. With the recent release of *Dune 2000* on PC, they've come full circle and also deigned the PS worthy of its own port of that neo-classic.

Now I'm not one to make broad-based generalizations, but if you've played one RTS, you've played them all (I can hear the angry mob forming to join the *FF*-Coalition at our gates). Sure, some of the rules change a little, and the pacing may be slightly different, but the general progression goes something like this: set-up base; harvest resources; build weapons; kill enemy; taunt weak, pathetic foe; repeat—that about sums it up. In *Dune 2K* the goal is to set-up a base of operations; mine spice; build tanks and various artillery; attack House Harkonnen (or Atreides or Ordos); laugh at the computer; repeat. Nothing terribly taxing, eh? Nope, but there are a few twists to make it a little more interesting.

For starters, the game takes place in Frank Herbert's universe of *Dune*. A universe that rotates around the world of Arrakis, home of the spice melange and the secret to great longevity and even greater intelligence—"Whomever controls the spice, controls the universe," or so the story goes. Like most of the world, I keep trying to erase the scars of the awful 1986 David Lynch 'adaptation' and get on with life, but to do those depths fun deep. Moving on...

Unlike the PC rev of *Dune 2K*, the PS edition features every unit in the game re-rendered as polygonal models instead of the rendered sprites housed in its progenitor (ooh, Roget-a-Thon); for good or ill. Good, in that it keeps the pace moving along at a fairly rapid pace; bad because, well, it isn't very pretty. The game clearly needs more color, but the animation is smooth and thankfully it doesn't in any way detract from the game itself.

Gameplay is smooth, quick, and intuitive—everything an RTS should be, but as is so often the case, isn't. Building of units is smooth and despite some 'control pad in a PC world' grievances (see below) *Dune* is a fun game. Sure, it's not gonna make a legion of PC gamers turn in their Pentium III's or Athlons, but it does give the console gamer yet another glimpse of what to expect when next-gen consoles send the PC off to the same place the dinosaurs now reside.

Amazingly enough, the game also

REVIEW	ECM: Now this is Scary Spice!	Developer - Westwood Studios	1 Player	Viewpoint Score: 84
		Publisher - Westwood Studios	Available Now	



5 Questions (plus 1) with Simon Golding, Technical Director, *Dune 2000*

GF: What other games have you worked on?
SG: At Westwood, *Dune 2000* will be my fourth title, following the immense success of *Command & Conquer, Red Alert,* and *Retaliation*. Previously, over the last 14 years, I have worked on titles such as *Mortal Kombat II, FIFA 96, Striker Pro, The Humans, Fiendish Freddy's Big Top O' Fun, Ferrari Formula One, Viking Child, The Fidgetts*, plus many more that I try to forget.

GF: Why did you get into the gaming scene?
SG: Why would I have wanted any kind of real world job? I love making games almost as much as I love playing them, I also seem to have a knack for figuring out how to get a console system to do what I want it to. Turns out there is a huge market for someone with that knack. Also, there are not many other careers where you could crawl out of bed in the afternoon and start working without even leaving your bedroom.

GF: Why port *Dune 2K* to the PlayStation instead of *Tiberian Sun*?
SG: *Tiberian Sun* was not even a consideration. *Dune 2000* was an excellent choice for the PlayStation. It was Westwood's way of saying goodbye to the PlayStation with a final, top-notch strategy game, this time in glorious 3D.

GF: What led you to work at Westwood Studios?
SG: I was working for Virgin Interactive in London, and Westwood (then owned by Virgin) at that time needed someone with immense talent to work on *Command & Conquer* for the PlayStation. I was asked if I wanted to spend a few months in Las Vegas. A few months has turned into over three years. I love it here.

GF: Why replace the rendered sprites of the PC rev with polygons in the PS version?
SG: We decided to take the PC version to the next level. Polygons let us make the units bigger and animate them better. From the beginning of the PlayStation production we decided to make this product stand out in the marketplace. I'm positive the PlayStation strategy game players are going to love it. That's been our view on all our PlayStation products, to give the user a new and fresh experience every time they buy one of our products.

GF: *Dune*: good movie or bad movie and why?
SG: I wouldn't say it was good or bad; it's just David Lynch. You'll know what I mean if you've ever seen any of his other movies. It's definitely easier to watch with a six pack of beer. I love sci-fi, *The Phantom Menace* rules, by the way, and I even like Jar Jar.

NE

TM





employs the Dual-Shock pad, in such a way that one stick moves the cursor while the other moves the screen. Finally console RTS players don't have to hold down a button or scroll the screen around with the pointer...cast off your shackles, my brood! On the downside, the game still runs under much the same engine that piloted the previous two *C&C* games on PS, meaning that accessing the nav bar can be an exercise in frustration. Much like trying to steer a shopping cart with a bad wheel—just when you get it down, it decides it wants to do things its way again .. "Clean up in aisle five—we have a customer taking a blow torch to his cart." You get the picture...

So while I count the days off in my meaningless existence, forever pining for a game that will never be, at least I have *Dune* to keep me company in the dank, dark hours before the never-coming dawn. With the circle complete, Westwood can finally move on, and maybe give us another chapter in the once amazing Kyrandia series. Hey, maybe something else might. Now on the down-tech, should leave the bad puns to Pastner.

If he had known what kind of worms Paul was talking about when he 'triple-dog-dared' him to eat some, ECM might have brought some ketchup... and a lot of Pepto.

Assume the role of a con in a world gone totally wrong...welcome to

GTA2





A tari's old-school arcade game *A.P.B.* was released back when I really loved arcade games. I don't know about you, but patrolling the streets took on a whole new meaning in that game. Atari threw in every stereotype in the book, from the donut shops to the bad, old-lady drivers. Well, *Grand Theft Auto 2* is the antithesis to *A.P.B.*

With its bird's eye, overhead perspective, *GTA2* is an *A.P.B.* for the new millennium. Who really wants to be Blue when you can be Mel Gibson in *Payback*? The first *GTA* was a super-shock indeed... How many other games do you know of that were banned in multiple countries and states? What other game could cause the general, seemingly harmless, populace to call the publisher and verbally threaten the lives of its employees?





Well, for good or bad, *GTA2* is here. DMA's also added a whole bunch of stuff that'll alleviate the repetition of the original. There are many more gangs this time around, though you'll only encounter three in a single mission. The Yakuza, Zaibatsu, and the Hare Krishna are just some of the groups to watch for. Each of these gangs will offer you work, and as your respect increases with one group it'll decrease with their rivals. With that said, when you piss off a certain gang, they won't take kindly to you wandering their turf and may send a couple potshots your way.

It's nice to know that you're not just some random thug like the ones in Fox's Scariest *Police Chases XXVII*. What's a city with only one bad apple? *GTA2* has a bunch of 'em. If you don't watch your back, a passing mugger could get the better of you. Or the same thing could happen when you're stopped at a light; a random carjacker could plant you face-first on the pavement and take off in the Beamer which you'd stolen fair and square.

I really enjoy car-jacking taxi drivers, ice cream trucks, police, and SWAT vehicles. Everything *Driver* tried to do, but didn't, is here. Police chases can be dynamic with half a dozen police cars on your tail while a SWAT team and police roadblock attempt to stop you dead—very dead—in your tracks. Christmas is a time for giving, but I'm still not sure whether this is for someone who's naughty or nice... we'll let you know next month. **C**



PREVIEW

CERBERUS: WE HAVE A 10-34 IN WEST AVALON...AND BRING THE BEAR CLAWS...

DEVELOPER - DMA DESIGN
PUBLISHER - ROCKSTAR

1 PLAYER
AVAILABLE 4TH QTR. '99

Enter the realm of Ardon...









One of the most popular game franchises in PC land is the *Might & Magic* series. *A Dungeons & Dragons* knock-off, *Might & Magic* is one of the few licenses to successfully capture the spirit of fantasy gaming—*Bard's Tale*, *Ultima* and the aforementioned *Dungeons & Dragons* being the others. Now, 3DO is bringing that universe to the PlayStation.

Let's set the stage... You play Drake, who is hell-bent on exacting revenge on Necros, the evil necromancer (I wonder if that is his given name?). Ten years earlier, Necros had laid waste to Drake's entire village, leaving him the sole survivor of his people. Now a seasoned mercenary, he is ready for payback.

Ok, so it reeks of *Conan* and *BeastMaster*, but when's the last time a fantasy adventure had an original plotline? Damned if I can remember. And while the last thing the PlayStation needs is another 3rd-person action adventure, it is nonetheless a welcome sight to see (although I would have preferred to see one of the PC titles ported over... PlayStation is in dire need of games of that ilk). Besides, there needs to be some alternative to the upcoming *Xena* titles... doh!

Crusaders will feature the same type of gameplay made commonplace by titles such as *Tomb Raider* and *Syphon Filter*. You'll be navigating Drake through numerous treacherous environments, from perilous cliff faces to booby-trapped castle hallways to monster filled forests. As the game progresses, so will the difficulty of the puzzles and levels. Drake will gradually learn to use spells as well as pick up an assortment of weapons and magic items. While I don't recognize any of the monsters from past *Might & Magic* titles, expect to see familiar denizens like elementals, evil sorcerers, and legions of undead (the antagonist *is* a necromancer, after all).

Can *Might & Magic* capture the imagination of PlayStation gamers like it has PC gamers? Hopefully, *Crusaders* will be able to do the heralded franchise justice, delivering the quality of gaming that made the series so popular.





Crusaders of Might & Magic

Developer - New World	1 Player	The Judge: Begone, evil scourge, before I smite thee!
Publisher - 3DO	Available 4th Qtr.	

COMING SOON

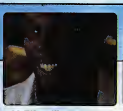
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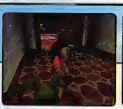


Planet of the Apes (Fox Interactive) — Chuck Heston can finally look cool to his grandchildren ("Daddy, Grandpa's makin' the ugly monkey face again!") in this latest PS game. A strange license but promising nonetheless.

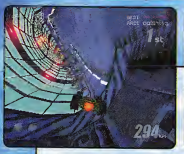


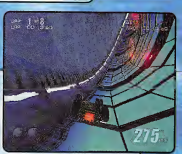

X-Files (Fox Interactive) — The truth is out there... it's up to you and your Dual Shock to help bring the conspiracies to a halt. A port of the popular PC game, *X-Files* on the PS was written by the one and only Chris "I bet you can't possibly fathom the size of my house" Carter.




40 Winks (GT Interactive) — GT's first foray into the world of the 3D platformer. Take control of two characters, Ruff and Tumble, as they attempt to rescue the stolen winks from an evil sandman.



RollCage Extreme (Psygnosis) — Fatboy Slim and the rest are sure to return, supplementing Rollcage's gravity-defying gameplay with some Funk Soul tuneage. Expect plenty of insane lighting effects as well.






Destruction Derby 3 (Psygnosis) — While Infogrames might have *Demolition Racer*, nothing can beat the king of carnage. *Destruction Derby 3* will be met with much anticipation as the world of demolition games continues to grow.

This is no time to second guess yourself.

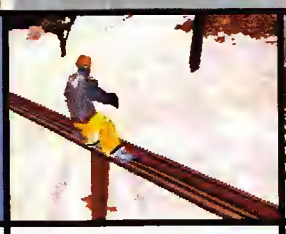
Killer soundtrack
including music performed by
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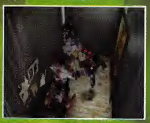
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Reviews



Harvest Moon 64 ➤



Resident Evil 2 64

Previews

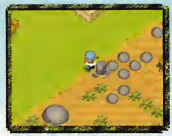
Ridge Racer 64 68

Castlevania: Resurrection 70

Excitebike 64 72







Fierce rainstorms, savage wildlife, and bone-chilling winters!

Tuesday September 7th: It's been two weeks since my last journal entry, and my condition has worsened significantly. The testosterone injections didn't take, and the football tryouts didn't go so well... As I become more Shidoshi-like everyday, I'm at a complete loss for words. What's next? *Sailor Moon*? <shudder> Last month, I enjoyed *Thousand Arms*, a fruity RPG with dating sim elements. This month, the Shidoshi sickness has spread to my taste in sims. I now share an inexplicable love for *Harvest Moon 64*, a fruity "farm sim" with an astronomical cute factor—this, this just defies the laws of nature in the gaming universe. Why, oh why, would I enjoy a game that's not about "one man saving the world?" A game that doesn't involve "vanquishing the Forces of Evil and sending them back from whence they came?"

Nope, *Harvest Moon 64* has none of that—it's just a simple game about life on a farm. Those who played the SNES or Game Boy versions know what to expect, as this is basically the same game with updated graphics and a few more features. The only forces of evil you'll be battling are Mother Nature and wild animals. The gameplay involves raisin' animals, growin' crops, and doin' chores. And the biggest dilemma in life is deciding which townlady you're gonna marry.

These ideas, while not completely original (remember this is a sequel), are a refreshing break from the norm for a video game. No scavenger hunts, no puzzles, no 1st-person bloodbaths... just a farmer, his animals, crops, and the land that his ancestors worked before him.

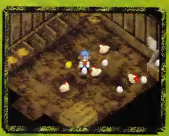


Speaking of ancestors, according to the story, your grandfather has moved on and left you the farm. Though most of the townspeople don't think you can handle the monstrous task of restoring the family farm to its former glory, you set out to prove them wrong. The only thing helping you is your adorably cute dog, who's along more for moral support than anything else in the early going.

The game's characters are composed of sprites, but the environments are polygonal. Because of the way the characters are rendered, they appear rounded and look like they have depth as well, so they fit in well with the 3D backgrounds.



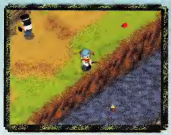


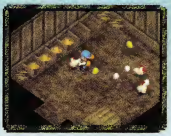


















Harvest Moon's presentation is also ultra-cute, and the look bears a vague resemblance to PlayMobil toys. The graphics aren't pushing the envelope for the N64, but they're good at what they do—present a completely adorable, peaceful world. Likewise the music is pretty good by N64 standards, though it can get repetitive since it loops back to the beginning whenever you walk offscreen; do that like four times in a row, and you'll find it a bit grating.

But what's most important about this game, and what makes it so much fun is the gameplay. Perhaps it's best if I took you through a sample day's work: Wake up, feed the chickens, collect the eggs, put an egg in the incubator (so it someday becomes a chick), then let the cows or sheep out if the weather's nice, but don't forget to talk to them and brush them to make them feel better, pick the vegetables in the garden, and put them in the collection box for extra cash, then water the crops, and pull out any weeds. Going into town, flirt with the woman of your dreams, talk with the townspeople, buy some feed for the animals or seeds for the harvest, maybe lend a helping hand to the people building that new bridge, fish at the river for a little while, then head back home, watch some TV to check out tomorrow's weather report or the news to see what's goin' on locally, then go to sleep, and repeat the next day.



...aww, who'm I kidding? It's about growing vegetables!











So does that sound like something you'd want to do? Well, since I didn't grow up wrestling cows or playin' in cornfields like some people, I get to vicariously live out that life as a farmhand thanks to *Harvest Moon 64*. It's pathetic I know, I could be dancing with Rinoa in a ballroom, seeking vengeance against Kain, or going toe-to-toe with Afro Thunder, but I would rather milk a cow... <breaking down in tears>.

Fellow sausages, what... have I become? What kind of world do we live in that my tastes now coincide with Shidoshi? Is *Sailor Moon* <gasp>... really not that bad? Will I someday be standing in line at a store to buy a copy of *Seaman*? <shaking head to clear the cobwebs> No, this can't be. I swear this will be the last "Shidoshi game" I like... It's time I crush somebody in *NFL2000* and *Soul Calibur*! Oh, Fury...?

Eggo once stood staring out at a California sunset, dreaming of being a farmboy on Tatooine... then thought better of it, got in his car, and drove back to the Starbucks in Westwood.















Were off to the races!

One of the new features in *Harvest Moon 64* is racing. Both your dog and your horse can be entered in different races throughout the year. And you can also bet on the outcome of these horse and dog races (though not the ones which you're participating in). Despite having the ability to breed chickens and cows, it doesn't look like you can breed horses (guess you'll have to play *Gallop Racer* for that).





Choose your destiny...

Choose Your Destiny...? Similar to *Thousand Arms*, *Harvest Moon 64* has mild dating-sim elements. As you develop into a hulking brute of a farmhand, the ladies in town grow up to be beautiful young farmgirls. As the seasons come and go, the women become more friendly. And after many a cold winter, you'll be wishing there were a wife to come home to. Your choice of said wife will be limited to one of five town-ladies: Karen (whose family owns the vineyard), Elli (who helps her parents with their bakery), Popuri (works at the flower shop), Maria (the librarian), and Ann (daughter of a neighboring rancher).







REVIEW

EGGO: SOWIN' THE SEEDS OF LOVE...

DEVELOPER - TOYBOX	1 PLAYER	VIEWPOINT SCORE • 91
PUBLISHER - NATSUME	AVAILABLE NOW	

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RESIDENT EVIL 2

Raccoon City: a popular, rural tourist town, growing by leaps and bounds. Known for being at the forefront of experimental technology, Raccoon City is home to big corporation Umbrella's state-of-the-art research facility. Many S.T.A.R.S. also call this place home, and they can be seen wandering about everyday. Animal lovers will also appreciate the wide variety of free-roaming wildlife in the town. Bird watchers can admire the well-fed crows and beautiful moths which populate the city, flying about without a care in the world... they'll even eat out of your very hand! Friendly dobermans, cuddly spiders, and a world-famous alligator are also popular for photo-ops with the tourists. So come one, come all to the fastest-evolving city this side of Atlanta! Raccoon City—where everyone's dyin' to go...

Hats off to Angel Studios... between marathon *EverQuest* sessions and the hiring of hot new secretaries, it's a miracle that the team found time to get this much work done. Early versions of *RE2* for N64 (including what was at E3) looked decent, but far from stunning. However, now that the final's here, it looks like a completely different game.

Though I wasn't singin' this tune earlier in the year, the N64 version is graphically superior to the PlayStation. The main characters have been run through the washing machine a few times, because their textures and facial features are super-clean. Pre-rendered backgrounds which were once murky in our preview copy, now look incredible (though they are not as clean as the PS ones). Angel Studios must've stolen a page from Iguana's book, because they've got the N64 dialed in. Even the sounds are present... every bit of speech, ambient music, and sound effects... it's all there!

And I haven't even mentioned the best part. Thanks to the wonders of the pocket-sized RAM Pak, *Resident Evil 2* runs in high-res! Yes, it's safe to say

R REVIEW

EGGO: DON'T SHOOT! I'M A HU... ERR, EGGO!

DEVELOPER - ANGEL STUDIOS/CAPCOM	1 PLAYER
PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	AVAILABLE NOV. '99

VIEWPOINT SCORE • 92

that *Resident Evil* has never looked this good... and it won't again, until we crack the *Veronica* Code next year.

So is that all there is to it? Should you trade in your PS copy of *RE2* for the new and improved N64 rev is not without its flaws. The CG, while vastly improved from previous versions, is still not as crystal clear as it is on PlayStation. And there's another problem worth noting... the control. Though Capcom had a golden opportunity to correct one of the biggest problems with this series, it decided to leave the control scheme as is. What that means is you have a choice of using the d-pad and buttons to run (exactly like the PlayStation version) or you can use the analog stick which will run for you, but moving left or right on the analog will still have your character rotate instead of actually taking steps in that direction (which would've been better). Though I tried and I tried, using the analog control with this game just never did it for me. Time and again, I'd give up in frustration, resorting to the digital control, which is more natural for someone who first played this game on PS one too many times.

Unfortunately, using the d-pad on the N64 controller is a bit awkward, since it's designed more for analog; and I'd much rather use a Dual Shock to play *RE2*.

Lastly, if you've done your fair share of zombie-mulching in the PlayStation incarnation of this game, then you need not fork out the cash for chapter "X" in the survival horror compendium. As the only difference between that version and this is a slight improvement in visuals and the high resolution. However, if for some reason, you missed *Resident Evil 2* on the PS (I don't want to hear your lame excuses!), and smearing zombie brains across the walls of Raccoon City sounds like your idea of a good time, then buy this game! Do yourself a favor and fill your stocking with this lil'l dose of survival horror. If you have a choice of buying either the N64 or the PS version (having not played either of them), I'd choose the N64 *RE2*, despite the control problem, because high-res games have that appeal—once you've tried it, you'll never go back.







Eggo still has flashbacks of the "GameFan Books" days when he worked on the official Resident Evil 2 *strategy guide... triggered whenever he hears the Capcom "menu select" sounds or sees a green herb.*


MATURE
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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB





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Can You Survive the Horror?

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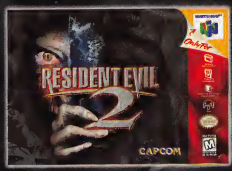




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RR64

ridgeracer64



When I first heard that Nintendo had scored a popular Namco license, I immediately hoped that we'd see a version of *Tekken* on the N64. Not that I'm a fan of the series, but Nintendo is seriously lacking a decent fighting game to round out its lopsided library. As we all know, the last thing the N64 needs is another racing game.

But, guess what? Nintendo has licensed the code for the racer that helped drive the PlayStation to dizzying heights, *Ridge Racer*. Unfortunately, it's not the most recent incarnation of the series, *R4*; instead, the obviously-titled *Ridge Racer 64* is a hybrid of the original, and its quasi-sequel, *Ridge Racer Revolution*. So much for timeliness, but, knowing Nintendo, they wouldn't have bothered to license the code if they were going to do a half-baked job.

Nintendo Software Technology (Nintendo's new in-house development team) has been optimizing the code for the N64 and graphically, it's a peach. This is the smoothest that *Ridge Racer* has ever been. Frame-rates during the single player game are silken, and even the polygon hungry four-player version (a first for the series) doesn't chug too much. Considering that the game doesn't have a planned release beyond spring 2000, you can assume that NST won't let it out the door until all the problems have been effectively minimized. The visuals, in general, have been cleaned up, from the track textures to the cars themselves. As far as N64 racers go, this is the prettiest one not piloted by Anakin Skywalker.

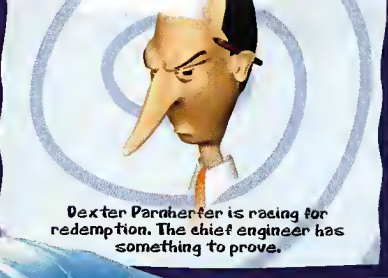
Speaking of cars, there are over 20 vehicles to unlock, depending on how well you place. There are eight tracks to prove your driving skills on, and while we've seen some of them before, you might have a difficult time recognizing them. Backgrounds have been altered to give the game a northwestern feel—namely trees and mountains. In the spirit of exclusivity, three of the eight tracks appear only on the N64, and the soundtrack is entirely new.

The game handles slightly different from the original *Ridge Racer*, too. Instead of the trademark "floaty" controls that lead to sweet powerslides, NST has opted to give the game a tighter feel. Don't fret, because you can still purposely over-steer and pass cars on corners at blazing speeds—a classic *Ridge Racer* strategy.

It's hard to deny the fact that this is a five-year-old game, but this could end up being the best version of the classic *Ridge Racer* available. That might not float a PSX owner's boat, but it should certainly pique the interest of those who have an N64 in their living room. **6**

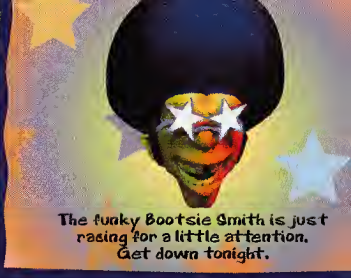
PREVIEW	THE SIXTH MAN: DÉJÀ VU 64	DEVELOPER - NST PUBLISHER - NINTENDO	1-4 PLAYERS AVAILABLE SPRING





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se Rainbow is racing to put peace, love d happiness back into the mainstream.





Major General Jessip Ergertain is racing to be "top dog" and take command once again.



















Play it Again, ECM...

As one of the truly great gaming forebears, the *Castlevania* series is one of the few that is regarded with reverence and is duly accorded legendary status. With the dawn of the 32-bit age, amidst a stampede of developers to the cozy new digs of 3D, Konami stuck to their guns and gave gamers exactly what they were looking for: a blazing 2D rendition of *Castlevania*. Though the game more resembled a latter day *Metroid*, it was welcomed with open arms by any that still considered themselves truly about games and **not** about graphics. Not to say that *SotN* lacked the graphical punch it needed to compete, replete with über-sharp colors, crisp, clean scrolling, and all the hallmarks of what an amazing 2D action/adventure needed to be in this, the dawning of a new age—an age that has since seen this staple of gaming completely suffocated and left lifeless.

Sadly, that plague reached even the next chapter in the *Castlevania* saga. Eschewing a powerful 2D, PlayStation follow-up, Konami decided to bring it to the grandson of the console that made it the name it is today: the N64. Now you can blame it on the N64's lack of prowess with 2D graphics (an argument that went south with the advent of Treasure's *Bakuretsu Muteki Bangaio*), but it really comes down to the fact that nobody wants a stunning 2D game anymore. Oh sure, on occasion we'll get tossed the rare bone (the last rare bones we got were *The Adventures of Little Ralph*—which my dog summarily buried—and the previously mentioned *BMB*). But what you, I, and everybody else has irrevocably proven (with the failure of such games as *Skull Monkeys* and the relatively low sales numbers of *SotN*) is that we don't want games like this anymore—games with solid, impressive visuals and utterly unbelievable play value. We want flashy, 3D, 60 FPS graphics (just make sure that you're aware that even NES games ran at that speed) and if the game happens to have great 'play, it's a nice bonus.

Castlevania®
Legacy of Darkness



PREVIEW

ECM: A hundred years just isn't what it used to be.

Developer - Konami	1 Player
Publisher - Konami	Available 4th Qtr.















Put a Fork—Or Better Yet, a Stake—in It.

The initial N64 resurrection of *Castlevania* proved to be a less-than-admirable attempt at keeping the series to its roots, offering a rushed (three months early), lackluster experience. Needless to say, the honest amongst us drove a wooden stake deep into the heart of that misbegotten beast the moment it reared its unholy countenance. Now it's less than a year later, and Konami has proffered a peace offering in the form of a seriously upgraded version of the hit (yeah, amazingly enough it sold like hotcakes) game from earlier this year.

Is it enough to wash the bad garlic taste from the mouths' of gamers everywhere? Or is it simply another 'cash-run,' enabling Konami to milk just a bit more from the venerable line of Vampire Killers from a populace so desperate to believe that 3D is the **only** answer? Thankfully, it seems that even Dracula won't be rushing to drive a stake into his own, black, putrid heart.

More Lives than a Legion of Cats at a Pitbull Convention

This time out, Dracula's resurrection is accomplished with the help of Death itself. Seems that if you're employee of the month for a couple of hundred years, even the big boss himself will take an active interest in your case (though considering that he keeps dying, how valuable could he be?). However, in order for the Reaper to accomplish this small feat, he has to kidnap the sister of Cornell, man-beast. Obviously he doesn't take too kindly to having his little sis kidnapped and used in a sacrificial rite to resurrect the greatest plague mankind has ever known. So off he goes to save his sister and put Dracula down one more time before he's resurrected to work a little evil on Dreamcast early next year (those hundred years between reigns of terror seem to be getting uncomfortably close together—Drac probably needs a vacation in the sunny Tropics).

There are also side-quests for the two returning heroes, Reinhardt and Carrie, as well as one additional character in the form of Henry, the pistol-wielding gentleman. While they all share the same basic level structure, each gets their own unique sub-levels along the way to encourage some measure of replay value. Hopefully there will be more levels like the fight against the 'dragon boss on the lake' sequence.

Play Misty For Me

As for the game engine, things haven't changed much with the seasons. *Castlevania SE* still has the same night-into-day-into-night feature and the same murky, fog-filled landscapes. Overall the game has been given a slight graphic facelift with better textures and some nice environs, but at this stage nothing screams 'true sequel.' Considering this is merely a revved up version of the previous game, it's not like we were expecting much—but we never stop hoping (in vel-, err, vain...).

The actual game speed, however, is S-L-O-W. Or at least it currently is. This game needs a serious shot in the pacing of enemy encounters as it's a little devoid of such at this point. This (we hope) will be rectified in time for the final... if not, well, you can always watch molasses run.

The End of the Line?

Well no, of course not. If there's one thing about *Castlevania* games you can bank on it's that there will always be another (regardless of that niggling 'every hundred years' thing). Hopefully this will prove a worthy addition to the Dracula bloodline... though I still pray to the unholy hosts every night that we may yet see a return to 2D. **EGM**

The Nintendo 64 gets down and dirty

Excitebike 64



With the Dreamcast in my house and next-gen systems from the Big "N" and Sony on the way, there are fewer and fewer reasons to dust off the old NES. *Excitebike*, though, is still one of those reasons. But, for how much longer... now that Nintendo has announced the long-awaited follow-up to the only motocross game that matters.

Excitebike 64 is essentially the classic NES game, but in 3D. Consider that a big compliment. If this ends up being half as addictive as the original, then we're all in for a big treat. Developer Left Field, the team responsible for the first N64 *NBA Courtside*, has retained all of the arcade-style play elements that made the first one such a winner and successfully blended them with some top-notch technology. Remember the fun of knocking an opponent off the track with a well-placed wheel bump? You can still do that in this update, just as you can still employ a wicked turbo boost to catch mad air off an insane jump. Yet despite its arcade inclination, Left Field has mixed in one of the best physics engines employed in a motocross game. You really do feel like you have a monster between your legs...so to speak.





Pop in the Expansion Pak, and this ends up being the prettiest motocross racer, period. Tear it up on 20 tracks of lush jungles, photo-realistic rocks, and stadiums that breathe dirt. Death-defying jumps wow the crowd in the Stunt Competition, but if you require the freedom to ride, check out the Desert Jump mode where you can open 'er up on a randomly generated dune sea. Once you master the tracks, fire up the Track Editor and have at it with the best set of design tools seen in a console construction set.

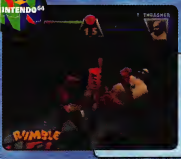
The game rides like a champ. Left Field has managed the perfect balance of arcade and sim, with a shock-absorbing suspension system that accurately reacts to jumps that couldn't be pulled off in real life. Throw your bike across one of the treacherous canyon jumps and you'll know exactly what I'm talking about. Finding the perfect balance between these two play styles—fun and realism—will make or break *Excitebike 64*. Judging from our test run, Left Field has the skills to walk the line better than Johnny Cash. **6**

64 bits of mega-motor-madness!

The Sixth Man: 64 bits of mega-motor-madness!	Developer - Left Field	1-4 Players
	Publisher - Nintendo	Available Spring

COMING SOON

COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON







Ready 2 Rumble (Midway) — N64 owners can finally enter Midway's comical boxing ring for themselves. Ladies and gentleman... dust off your gloves, pop in that expansion pak, and get ready to Ruuuumble!!!







NBA Showtime (Midway) — Move over, *Hangtime*, there's a new basketball king in town! Arcade insanity comes home to the N64, complete with an all-star lineup and simple gameplay that even Fury can hack. "Eggo, rematch... please!"







Pokemon Stadium (Nintendo) — Known as *Pokemon Stadium 2* in Japan (the original was missing a number of monsters), this *Monster Rancher*-style game is sure to be a huge seller in the U.S. Gotta catch them all... I guess.







Turok: Rage Wars (Acclaim) — Finally, only three years after the N64's been out... and developers are just now realizing the value of multi-player capabilities. Acclaim goes one further and devotes an entire cart to just multi-player madness.







Toy Story 2 (Activision) — Pixar's Buzz Lightyear and friends are back for another lighthearted N64 adventure. This time around you must Rescue Woody from the clutches of an evil toy collector. And remember, The Claw is my master!



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GRAB ANYTHING





FIGHTING GAME ON THE PLANET.

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Sega Dreamcast.

Review

Virtua Fighter 3tb

Preview

Climax Landers 80



I'm writing this review on my birthday, and because of that, the only thing I can think about is getting old. It's something I dread with a passion because who wants to think about aging, especially in a young industry like video games, right? Well, of all the irony... next up on my plate—*Virtua Fighter 3tb,* a game which we gushed over so much a year ago that it took the cave janitor (Posty, in his off-time) three days to clean up the mess thereafter. Taking a trip down memory lane, I reread our import review of *VF3tb* in the January '99 issue, and I'm flabbergasted at how far we've come. Progress is definitely a good thing, but it also doesn't bode well for older titles... Case in point: *Virtua Fighter 3tb.*

Virtua Fighter 3tb





When this game debuted in Japan 11 months ago, it stood out like a supermodel in a Comp Science class. Compared to fellow launch games *Pen Pen Trilcelon, July,* and *Godzilla, Virtua Fighter 3tb* was a superstar... but alongside games like that, *Trickstyle* would have looked like a godsend as well. However, now that the Dreamcast has launched in the States, titles like *Sonic Adventure, NFL2K,* and *Soul Calibur* are the new celebrities. And sadly, Namco's lone DC title has managed to surpass the once-mighty *VF3tb.*

After cutting a swath of destruction through waves of Lizardmen, ogling Ivy's jiggling form, and wincing every time a weapon struck the floor, I can certainly say that *Soul Calibur* has completely changed the way I look at 3D fighters. Then I popped in *Virtua Fighter 3tb* for the U.S. Dreamcast, and my jaw dropped all right—the game floored me in seconds... but not in a good way. The former great *Virtua Fighter 3,* which I drooled over in arcades three years ago (remember when Model 3 first came out?), is now showing signs of age.

Level opponents with bone-crushing skills in Drunken Boxing, Aikido, and Jiujitsu!



Formerly gorgeous character models can't compete with the bodies of *Soul Calibur*. Musically, though I enjoyed *VF2's* music a lot (owned the soundtrack), *VF3's* is not as good; and *Soul Caliburj* just blows the doors off it.

OK, so the graphics aren't arcade perfect and certain parts of the game are showing their age... At least *VF3tb's* fully 3D backgrounds are still impressive, and the game's best feature is still intact. The gameplay is classic *Virtua Fighter*—the pinnacle of 3D fighters to date. No fighting game is as deep or has as daunting a learning curve as *Virtua Fighter 3* (including *Soul Calibur*). Counters have never been more skillful, moves have never been more difficult to perform, and strategies have yet to be as intricate in a 3D fighter as *VF3*. If you don't care at all about eye candy, music, or extras, then this is the 3D fighter for you.

However, there's a hitch... the DC pad (one of the most non-fighting-game-friendly pads ever) quickly shatters any immediate dreams of having the full arcade experience at home. Now if you dedicated your life to mastering the intricacies of this pad, I'm sure you could eventually pull off the Akira Dragon Lance on command, but I have no desire to do so. In arcades, I would rather play *Virtua Fighter 3* than *Soul Calibur*; but at home, I'd rather play *Soul Calibur* over *VF3tb*.

For those wondering what changes have taken place in the U.S. version from the Japanese, here's the breakdown. Minor graphical flaws still exist like the "fly-in slowdown" for certain stages (e.g., Shun's raft, Jeffrey's island); a few articles of clothing don't flow quite like the arcade (e.g., the edges of Jacky's jacket), and the character joints (look at those knees!) are still ugly and not arcade perfect.





However, two of the biggest gripes about the import have been addressed: there's now a versus mode and the shadows on inclines have been fixed.

There was a time when 'near arcade perfect' console ports were acceptable, because nobody expected to see Model 3 at home. But with Dreamcast games like *Hydro Thunder* and *Soul Calibur* making the trip to your living room in better condition than when they started in arcades, gamers are growing accustomed to seeing console games that are better than their coin-op counterparts. It's unfortunate that Sega released this game in the U.S. months after *Soul Calibur* came out, especially since the majority of American gamers didn't appreciate *Virtua Fighter* to begin with...





Eggo will be wearing black in mourning of this legendary title until Shen Mue *arrives.*









VIEWPOINT SCORE: 85	1-2 PLAYERS	DEVELOPER - GENKI/AM2	EGGO: SERIOUSLY WOUNDED,
	AVAILABLE NOW	PUBLISHER - SEGA	BUT THE SOUL STILL BURNS...


LET THE EVOLUTION
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Ubi Soft ENTERTAINMENT
ESP
STING
Sega Dreamcast.

BEGIN.



"Evolution is a shining example of Dreamcast's power."
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"The Dreamcast handles Evolution's beautiful 3D world with ease, providing visual splendor that...puts Final Fantasy VIII's otherwise amazing aesthetics to shame."
-EGM



JOIN MAG LAUNCHER IN HIS BATTLE AGAINST THE 8TH EMPIRE & DISCOVER THE MYSTERIES OF ANCIENT PANNAMN AND "CYFRAME" TECHNOLOGY. REVOLUTIONARY 3D GRAPHICS AND LIGHTENING QUICK ANIMATIONS AND COMBAT DEMONSTRATE THE POWER OF THE SEGA DREAMCAST™. EVOLUTION, THE FIRST RPG FOR THE SEGA DREAMCAST™, TAKES THE RPG GENRE INTO THE NEXT, NEXT GENERATION.

神機世界
EVOLUTION
THE WORLD OF SACRED DEVICE

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Climax: one of those companies that hard-core gamers get all misty-eyed over. Not surprising, considering they gave us games like *Land Stalker* and *Dark Savior* (among others). Games that were revolutionary on their respective (Sega) platforms, and that set new standards in what could be done on the supposedly 'limited' hardware. Their other offerings (*Lady Stalker* on SNES, *Runabout* on PS) weren't nearly as remarkable but were reasonably solid efforts in their own right (not to mention Climax Graphics and *Blue Stinger*). Many have been praying since the day they passed *Land Stalker* for a sequel to that revolutionary title, but to no avail. However, upon hearing that Sega was re-entering the hardware foray rather aggressively, might Climax be willing to bestow upon us a little of that 'old school' magic? Maybe give a little something to the peeps? Well, not exactly .. but what they've offered up shows promise.

Enter *Climax Landers*, their first proper foray onto Sega's powerhouse console. And while it may not be the immediate 'classic' that *LS* and *DS* were, it may certainly be something to keep an eye on in the RPG-bereft world of Dreamcast.

While this preview is based upon the recently released import version, the news is good. For starters the game is coming Stateside, though Sega has yet to officially confirm it. However, its presence at Sega test-pretty much assures its imminent arrival (think Q1 2K), and it's desperately needed since UbiSoft with *Evolution* is the only other respite RPG gamers on the DC are gonna get for a while (as PS owners revel in the best lineup in some time).

Essentially, *CL* is the DC's answer to all those painful dungeon crawl games such as *Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon* on PS and *Fatal Labyrinth* all those years ago on Genesis. Good examples of the genre are Sting/UbiSoft's *Evolution* and, well, not much else... Enter level after level of randomly generated dungeons with various characters from the Climax universe (I suppose it's a little small to label it a universe... maybe microverse is a more apt description). While in those various levels, you must beat down enemies, collect new weapons, and defeat (of course) the boss in the last area.

Landers shows promise (at least for the initial run-through). We'll be back with more as the U.S. release 'lands' on our shores. For now, take a gander at these new pics, fire up that VMU (10 mini-games!) and get ready to journey along with Nigel one more time—hopefully as he treks into another adventure shortly thereafter. **ECM**



PREVIEW	ECM: Chocobo's Mysterious Landers?	Developer - Climax	1 Player
		Publisher - Sega	Available Now Japan

COMING SOON

COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON











Worms: Armageddon (Infogrames) — Strategy games have never looked or played this strange. Open up a can of worms on the DC and get ready to squirm this Christmas.



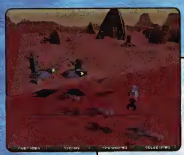






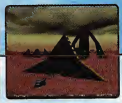


Dead or Alive 2 (Tecmo) — Remember what it was like when you first laid eyes on *VF3* (arcade)? The power of the Naomi hardware continues to blow gamers away, and *DOA2* is definitely no exception. Time to trade in *VF3tb*?











Star Trek New Worlds (Interplay) — Trekkies rejoice! Yet another *Star Trek* license for Sega's 128-bit pup. Information remains scant, but if previous games mean anything then we'll probably be playing a flight-sim RPG sometime from now.











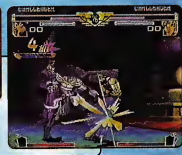
Virtua Striker 2 (Sega) — Sega's Model 3 arcade soccer game is on its way home. Look at how closely the game resembles the arcade piece. Only time will tell if this one lives up to our expectations.





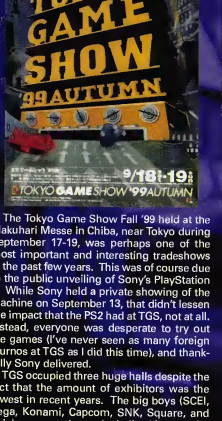






JoJo's Venture (Capcom) — Another CPSIII game, *Jojo* attracted only a handful of players at arcades. With its odd characters and very un-Capcom-like control, *Street Fighter* it ain't.

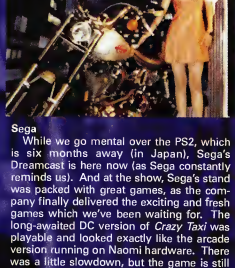
Japan Now!



The Tokyo Game Show Fall '99 held at the Makuhari Messe in Chiba, near Tokyo during September 17-19, was perhaps one of the most important and interesting tradeshows in the past few years. This was of course due to the public unveiling of Sony's PlayStation 2. While Sony held a private showing of the machine on September 13, that didn't lessen the impact that the PS2 had at TGS, not at all. Instead, everyone was desperate to try out the games (I've never seen as many foreign journos at TGS as I did this time), and thankfully Sony delivered.

TGS occupied three huge halls despite the fact that the amount of exhibitors was the lowest in recent years. The big boys (SCEI, Sega, Konami, Capcom, SNK, Square, and Enix) were at the main hall while smaller companies like Hudson and Data East had their stands in an adjacent hall. The third hall featured companies like Eidos, Square EA, and tons of small merchandise shops where companies like Square, Capcom, Konami etc. sold all kinds of cool stuff like *Resident Evil* guns and clothes. The main difference with TGS compared to E3 is that there's not a lot of chicken, as the companies know that the public in Japan will be buying everything game-related anyway, so why give it away for free?

As usual, the show's first day on Friday was press only, but despite this, the halls were packed as attendance was high thanks to Sony's PS2 unveiling. The two public days were sheer madness, as Japanese gamers waited in line for hours to get in and play some new games. It's nearly impossible to navigate the showfloor during the public days; you just get pushed along by the masses and actually playing something is pretty much impossible.



Sega

While we go mental over the PS2, which is six months away (in Japan), Sega's Dreamcast is here now (as Sega constantly reminds us). And at the show, Sega's stand was packed with great games, as the company finally delivered the exciting and fresh games which we've been waiting for. The long-awaited DC version of *Crazy Taxi* was playable and looked exactly like the arcade version running on Naomi hardware. There was a little slowdown, but the game is still early (release date in Japan is January 2000) and frankly, we could care less about a little slowdown as long as the gameplay is as mad and frantic as the arcade version. I had a go at the game using the DC pad; the control was great, and the game also supports the DC steering wheel. Sega is promising extra levels and features to guarantee that interest in the home version of *Crazy Taxi* doesn't wane after a few hours of play.

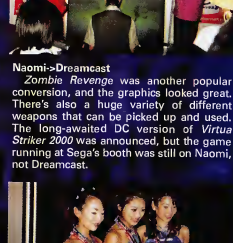
Space Channel 5

Sega's main game at the show was *Space Channel 5* which is being produced by Tetsuya Mizuguchi (of *Touring Car* and *Sega Rally* fame) and developed by an 'experimental' Sega team based in Shibuya, Tokyo. The player takes the role of heroine Ulala who, umm... battles aliens with her cool dancing. It's really hard to describe the game in words, but imagine a mix of *Bust A Groove* and *Parappa* and add that Sega touch, and you've got a game that went down a storm at TGS.



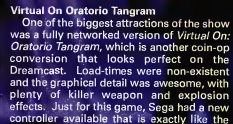
Shen Mue

Shen Mue was shown only in video form, which was a bit unexpected, but since the game should be available in Japan in October, perhaps Sega did the right thing by giving its other games more floorspace. Yu Suzuki was on-hand to give a demonstration of the game's massive variety and freedom. For example, there's an arcade in the game where a perfect rendition of Suzuki's own *Afterburner* can be played, *Shen Mue* is also going to take advantage of the VMS unit.



Naomi->Dreamcast

Zombie Revenge was another popular conversion, and the graphics looked great. There's also a huge variety of different weapons that can be picked up and used. The long-awaited DC version of *Virtua Striker 2000* was announced, but the game running at Sega's booth was still on Naomi, not Dreamcast.



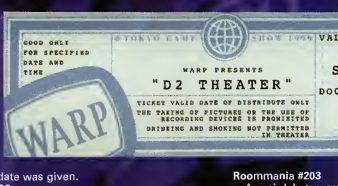
Virtual On Oratorio Tangram

One of the biggest attractions of the show was a fully networked version of *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram*, which is another coin-op conversion that looks perfect on the Dreamcast. Load-times were non-existent and the graphical detail was awesome, with plenty of killer weapon and explosion effects. Just for this game, Sega had a new controller available that is exactly like the

arcade (i.e. two sticks with trigger buttons). While the controller felt a bit clunky, the controls worked and added to the authentic arcade feel of the Dreamcast version. The online aspect should guarantee *Virtual On Oratorio Tangram* be a long-lasting game and one of the most popular Dreamcast games when it's released... which is the only problem, as no release date was given.

Chu Chu Rocket

Chu Chu Rocket was another DC game that takes full advantage of the machine's Internet capabilities. I didn't have enough time to play the game properly, but suffice it to say it's an action puzzle game with simple gameplay and Sonic Team is involved in production.



D2

Warp's forever-in-the-making, 4-GD mega-epic starring Laura was not playable, but Sega had a special demonstration of the game in a movie theatre at the show. The release date is now 12/23. It has to be said that while the presentation was stylish, with some excellent editing and great drum-'n-bass music, the graphics didn't look as hot as they did a while back. Laura's animation was unconvincing, but at least the character detail was quite good. It's really tough to say how *D2* will play, but with three hours of FMV promised and several different locations to explore, the game looks very much like a *Tomb Raider* clone with plenty of set-pieces and not much else.



Typing of The Dead

Award for the oddest title at the show must go to *Typing of The Dead*, which is basically *House of the Dead 2*, but instead of using the light-gun to take down zombies, you need to press the corresponding keys to shoot zombies. The goal is to get players to be faster at using their fingers... hmm...

Roommania #203

A weird but great-looking game in the vein of the classic C64 game *Little Computer People* (which was created by *The Boy and His Blob* creator David Crane... where is he now??). Sega describes the game as a human observation and communication simulator, where you are god and can direct peoples' lives... sounds like a game perfectly suited for ECM.

Super Producer

No, not Puff Daddy, but a new Sega game being developed by Hudson. Featuring full Internet support, *Super Producer* requires you to produce hit songs and promote them as well as possible, the graphics look great but the gameplay remains a mystery.

Phantasy Star Online

While it was not shown, *Phantasy Star Online* is definitely in the works and if proof was needed that Sega is concentrating its efforts on online gaming, this is it. Overall, Sega put up a really good show in the face of Sony's PS2 onslaught.



Sony

One word: PlayStation 2. Sony's massive, double-sized stand was almost entirely dedicated to the PS2, with *Gran Turismo 2000*, *Crash Team Racing*, and *Legend of Dragoon* (what's with the double-O... *Panzer* anyone?) representing the original PlayStation. The latter was a surprise RPG that oozed atmosphere with its great graphics and style. Sony also gave out CDs with demos of *Alundra 2* and *Robbit MonDieu*, aka *Jumping Flash 3*.



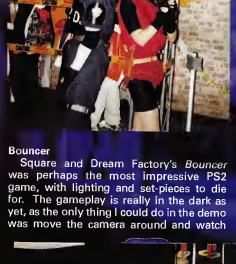
The sexy PS2 machine was available to look at in several glass cases, along with the new game packages and PS2 pads. Sony drove home the DVD message by having a small pod running DVD-video on the PS2—there goes my need to buy a dedicated DVD player. Now on to what you all have been waiting for, the PS2 games...

Gran Turismo 2000

There's still six months till the Japanese launch of the PS2 but already several games were made playable for the show. The leader of the pack was *Gran Turismo 2000*, which had super sharp graphics and awesome reflections on the cars. The cars were actually the only things that really took advantage of the hardware, as the backgrounds were unfinished and used textures from the original *GT* which didn't exactly look good. What is clear is that the PS2 can push a stunning amount of polygons per frame; plus, there were lots of huge buildings that went off into the distance with no fog whatsoever. The sun has never been more beautiful than it was in *GT2000*, with streaks of light coming from behind buildings and other objects—a really smooth effect, even if the lighting effect itself wasn't in place. Upon playing the game, I had the chance to check out the PS2 pad. It feels exactly like the Dual Shock, but the buttons are more stiff. Plus the games didn't support the analog button functions. The gameplay was good ol' *GT*, but man it feels better when you have graphics of this caliber.

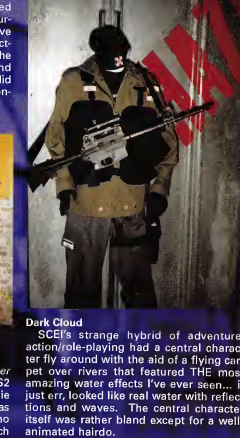
Tekken Tag Tournament

The other biggie was of course Namco's PS2 version of *Tekken Tag Tournament*. Again, the conversion was at a very early stage, but the power of the PS2 was evident. The characters were very smoothly modelled with no rough edges. The lighting was just beautiful, and the way it played off the characters was very cool and impressive. Six characters were playable, including Paul, Jin, and Eddy. Several different backgrounds were in this version, and the coolest was a street setting at night with lots of neon lights and shops visible in the background... all polygons instead of bitmaps. The concrete surface is riddled with puddles of water that reflect the surroundings—a gobsmackingly impressive effect, even if the characters weren't reflecting yet. The shadows generated by the fighters were also dead-accurate and impressive. The game played just as it did in the arcade with really responsive controls and tight game mechanics.



Bouncer

Square and Dream Factory's *Bouncer* was perhaps the most impressive PS2 game, with lighting and set-pieces to die for. The gameplay is really in the dark as yet, as the only thing I could do in the demo was move the camera around and watch the various hyper-detailed characters battling in a bar and trying to catch a train in a stunningly choreographed scene. There's tons of detail all around, and some killer PS2 effects thrown in for good measure. The game is choc-a-bloc full of *Matrix*-like "bullet-time" camera work that wowed the crowds and got the *Matrix*-manic *GF* posse all excited. Dream Factory and Square are a great combination, so hopes are high for *Bouncer* to deliver some great gameplay.



Dark Cloud

SCEI's strange hybrid of adventure/action/role-playing had a central character fly around with the aid of a flying carpet over rivers that featured THE most amazing water effects I've ever seen... it just err, looked like real water with reflections and waves. The central character itself was rather bland except for a well-animated hairdo.



Kessen

Koei's strategy game *Kessen* looked impressive in places with zillions of horses and soldiers battling on the screen without a hint of slowdown. Detail levels were quite good, but the animation of the horses and characters was weak.

Eternal Ring

Remember the early PS2 demo with the huge skeleton dragon romping about in a graveyard infested with skeletons... looks like *Eternal Ring* is the game in question. Developed by From Software, this is very reminiscent of Origin's classic *Ultima Underworld*, with beautiful cave environments with (yep, you guessed it) awesome lighting and some excellent textures which don't get blocky at all, no matter how close to the falls you are. In this early demo, it was possible to go around a short section of one tunnel. And at the end a huge (and I mean HUGE) dragon attacks from the darkness and spews fire... a really impressive scene and a very promising game.

Misc.

Also at Sony's PlayStation 2 area was Tecmo's weird-looking *Unisom*. A sequence with a rock-band onstage was shown, so I'm guessing this is going to be another game in the mega-popular Music (in Japan that is) genre. Another strange SCEI-developed PS2 game was a platform game where the central character used a bunch of wires that were attached around posts in the game world to move around. A short set-piece included a battle with a massive, old woman who tried swatting the player with her purse... weirdola.

SNK

Sacnoth's long-awaited *Koudelka* for the PlayStation was the main attraction at SNK's stand, and long queues formed as eager gamers waited to see a special presentation of the game. The game in question is a very dark and stylish action/rpg, and judging by gamers' reactions, SNK has a hit on their hands. The excellent Neo Geo Pocket was also featured heavily, and the much-hyped *SNK vs Capcom* game is hoping to bring the faltering handheld back into the limelight in Japan, where it is inexplicably losing to the monochrome WonderSwan.

Namco

Namco's PS2 stuff at their own stand was limited to long videos of *Shin Ridge Racer* and *GP500* that looked mighty impressive in places. The car models in *SRR* looked smooth and beautiful, perhaps even better than the ones in *GT2000*. There was lots of detail in the city track that had parts from the original PlayStation *RR* game. Huge buildings could be seen in the distance, and *SRR* had the best-looking trees I've ever seen in a game. The visuals were super sharp, and the transformation from dawn to daylight was pure ecstasy in terms of visual representation. *GP500* looked good too, and while the trackside detail was scarce, the speed was unparalleled. Perhaps we are finally getting a motorcycle game capable of beating *Hang On*. *Pac-Man* and *Dragon Valor* were the other games at Namco's stand, and certainly the latter proved to be extremely playable, with



Brave Fencer Musashi-style action and great graphics and controls. A U.S. release is expected early next year.

Capcom

Disappointingly, Capcom had nothing but its *Biohazard* (*Resident Evil*) games on show; PS2 stuff was a no-show. *Resident Evil 3* (despite the fact that it was released two days after the show) and *Code Veronica* for DC took center stage. The Dreamcast version looked a lot better than it did at the Spring TGS. The gameplay is exactly the same as it is in the PlayStation versions, and a winter release date has been promised by Capcom. One cool set-piece had a character blowing away zombies with two guns, John Woo-style, and after filling the zombie in question with lead, he stylishly kicked the creature's head off. A surprise game was without a doubt *Biohazard: Gun Game* which is basically a *House of the Dead 2* clone, complete with the usual 'door loading' screens featured in other *RE* games... doh! Besides *Street Fighter EX 3*, Capcom has several PS2 games in development, but since all projects are early in the development process, Capcom decided along with many other PS2 developers to let Sony show their own stuff.

Konami

Capcom has its Survival Horror cash-cow and Konami has its mega-popular *Beatmania* franchise. The company's stand was full of new Bemani games and a conversion of *Drummania* for the PlayStation 2 available for play. Sadly, Konami's other PS2 games like the new *Gradius* and others were only shown briefly on a video-wall where they looked dead impressive. A version of Konami's mega soccer series *Jikkyou Winning Eleven* was demoed on the PS2, and this got all the European and Japanese press very excited with its sharp graphics and promising gameplay. Other upcoming Konami PlayStation games are *Tokimeki Memorial 2*, *Eldergate*, and ahem... *Breeding Pet '99*, which has something to do with horses (whew!). Konami is also converting the Nintendo 64 ISS soccer game to the PlayStation; original developers Major A are handling the conversion duties. Like Capcom, Konami is in the middle of re-organizing its development teams due to the requirements of PlayStation 2 development.

Square

Everyone's favorite RPG developer, Square, put up a great show with *Parasite Eve 2*, *Chrono Cross* (the PS version of *Chrono Trigger*), *Dew Prism*, and *Vagrant Story*. The latter was very much in the vein of *Brave Fencer Musashi* and even contained a similair fight against a dragon, like in Namco's *Dragon Valor*. After a few lackluster releases like *CyberOrg* and *Racing Lagoon*, it looks like Square's back on track producing killer RPGs for the PlayStation and beyond.

Chrono Cross looked extemely beautiful with lush, 2D backgrounds and some superbly detailed and animated characters that put those of *FFVII* to shame. A section of Square's stand was dedicated to the art and history of *Chrono Trigger*, illustrating just how popular this game is. Based on the version of *Chrono Cross* at the show, Square is going in the right direction with the development after early worries about the fact that hardly any of the original designers are on board for *Chrono Cross*.

PE2 looked very much like a *Resident Evil* game with zombie-like characters appearing all over, with the beautiful and sexy heroine Aya Brea blasting them away. A new addition was a targeting crosshair that can be activated with the shoulder buttons; this makes shooting at the baddies a lot easier and the gameplay less frustrating. The FMV sequences were as you'd expect... pants-wettingly good once again.

A no-show was the Square PS2 racing game that is being developed by Square's LA team; this is slated to be a PS2 launch title in Japan. As avid readers know, Square is also in the middle of re-organizing its development studios, and apparently a lot of its main game development is now happening at the Honolulu studios.

Enix

Dragon Quest VII caused massive queues at Enix's stand, and the other game that the company showed was another cool-looking RPG called *Valkyrie Profile* (developed by Tri-Ace, the makers of *Star Ocean 2*). The 2D-based game with side-scrolling sections and awesome-looking battles looks like a worthy purchase after the mega-anticipated *DQVII* is released this Christmas in Japan.

Electronic Arts Square

EA Square's much-vaunted PlayStation 2 game *X-Fire* was shown, but the demo was looking just plain average with bland graphics. The gameplay was a really slow mixture of *Resident Evil*; lots of work is needed here, methinks.

Imagineer

Rage's PS2 game *Wild Wild Racing* was also in a very, very early state. The game is being programmed by Rage's coders who are working at Imagineer's Japanese HQ, since the Japanese developers got dev-kits earlier than Euro developers. The game is based on Rage's PC game *Off-Road* and uses the same physics engine and an improved 3D engine. While the physics felt sound, the game looked average to say the least. Again, this was due to the fact that the game was only a few months in development.

Tecmo

Soumatou was the most interesting game that Tecmo had on its stand. This PlayStation game is a creepy action game with very *Silent Hill*-like dark visuals and style. The settings include dark caves and haunted houses. *Dead or Alive 2* also put in a great appearance, as did a new soccer game called *Survival League*, not a patch on Konami's efforts though.

The Fall TGS proved to be a really good show not just because of the PS2, but due to the many great games that are coming out on various platforms later this year. Hopefully most of 'em are also U.S. bound...



Riot's Top 5 Tokyo Game Show Games

1. Tekken Tag Tournament
2. Shin Ridge Racer
3. Crazy Taxi
4. Space Channel 5
5. Bouncer

Imports

Reviews



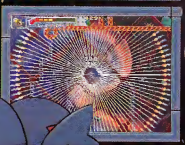
Bangaio ➤

Macross VF-X2 90











Weird, Wild, and Wonderful!

It's a well-established fact that Treasure has something that other developers do not; a flair for the original, the fruity, the über-bizzare (dare I say, savoir faire,..). Whatever it is—that special, utterly intangible *something*—it helps them craft games unlike any other studio in all of faraway Gamedom. Sometimes their wacky, over-the-top ways get the best of them (as in *Light Crusader* and *Mischief Makers*) but on other (and much more frequent) occasions they have a gift for raw, unfettered brilliance. After bearing witness to *Rakugaki Showtime* (see last issue) it was only reinforced in the minds of a gaming populace which has been so utterly jaded by the unchecked proliferation of half-hearted RPGs, racing and fighting games on PS—a legion of drivel so profound that only Cerberus could find respite in the eye of that murky storm (I still maintain that he was dropped on his head(s) too many times as a young pup—after all, he liked *Pepsiman*... a lot).

Nary two months later, we have their latest N64 title *Bakuretsu Muteki Bangaio* (*Yuke Yuke Troublemakers* a.k.a. *Mischief Makers* being the first). Does it fit into the former category of overly ambitious, oft-times head-scratching titles or does it belong in the latter (and much more prolific) group of heart-stoppers?

What's in a Name?

Think of *BMB* as a collage of Scavenger's *Sub-Terrania* on Genesis and *Omega Boost* on PlayStation. It features the same free-floating gameplay as the former, combined with the rotate and annihilate in any direction action of *Omega Boost* (only this time it's fun). Bolt that to some intense, *Macross*-style missile battles and you'll start to get a very vivid picture of what *Bakuretsu* (Explosive) *Muteki* (Suicidal) *Bangaio* (Robot) is all about—and believe me, that's about as apt as game titles get...

Fasten Your Safety Belts and to Hell With the Seat Flotation Cushions

Essentially, *BMB* is a scrolling shooter very much like the countless waves that beset consoles of old—games that put hair on your chest, and ended your 'meager-to-begin-with' social life. Since it's been eons since the last shooter made an appearance on N64 (the utterly drab, PC-Engine butchering,



Star Soldier 64 being the last), it should be more than appreciated by the small legion of gamers that miss the mindless, reflex-honing, shrapnel and bullet-filled shooters of yore.

At the controls of Bangaio (your mech), you're off to rid the universe of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Cruise over and around level after level of microscopic enemies, unleashing volley after volley of unrelenting missile attacks, out to destroy everything that moves, doesn't move, and has the effrontery to look at you the wrong (or right) way.

As you go, collect the various fruits that power-up your super, *Macross*-esque missile assault which will allow some pretty stunning combo attacks which will gain Bangaio entrance to the shop so that your various weapons and defenses can be upgraded in usefulness.









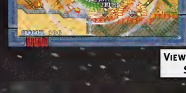












Under the Microscope...

...cause that's what you're gonna need to fully appreciate *BMS*' graphics with anything less than an S-Video display (you, of course, are using S-Video, right?). Super-small sprites litter the screen, against a backdrop of (hold on to your seat) parallax! Yes, that's right, once thought long since extinct, the mighty effect that powered numerous 16-bit wonders to the upper ends of graphical might makes a startling and completely unexpected return to life in Treasure's latest masterwork. True, there's only three layers tous, but hey, when you're dying of thirst in the desert...

For those of you not schooled in the ways of 2D, parallax was used to simulate depth in games before the advent of 3D worlds. Multiple layers of scrolling backdrops moving at different speeds (and directions, on occasion) would give the illusion of depth, adding a '3D' look to a 2D world. Incidentally, Treasure was the lord and master of making 2D 'look' 3D, which is odd given their lack of prowess with truly 3D gameplay (or at least attempts at such).

In fact, many around the office have commented that *BMB* looks pretty much like a SNES game, with less slowdown, a higher resolution and more color – a pretty accurate statement and something that lends even more charm to this amazing title. Heck, there's even a Mode 7 sequence at the end of each level as Bangaio rockets 'out of' the screen and on to the next mission—tres cool.

And just in case you were wondering if the lax Japanese laws on copyright infringement were even remotely being enforced, bear witness to the level summary screen. It features Ultraman laying the smack down on Godzilla—not to mention Ultraman's frequent appearances throughout the game... not that they say it's Ultraman, but <wink>, <wink>, <nudge>, <nudge>, it's him.

So Much to Say, So Little Space to Say It

In case I haven't made my case apparent enough, you **need** to buy this game. While no U.S. pub has picked up the rights as of yet, that doesn't mean you have to wait. Actually, the only reason you'd have to wait would be for the imminent arrival of the "massively" (their word, not ours) upgraded edition coming to Dreamcast by the end of the year. If you don't have a DC yet (what's the hold up?), then your path is clear: buy this game.



When ECM isn't wearing his super-small mech attack suit, delivering justice and freedom to all, he can be found at the local mall wearing his super-small "grown-up clothes" trying to get into the R-rated movies at the Cineplex.

Viewpoint Score	Developer - Treasure	1 Player	ECM: <School> Now where did I put my Claritin...
91	Publisher - ESP	Available Now Japan	

"The ultimate motocross simulation!"
- PlayStation Magazine

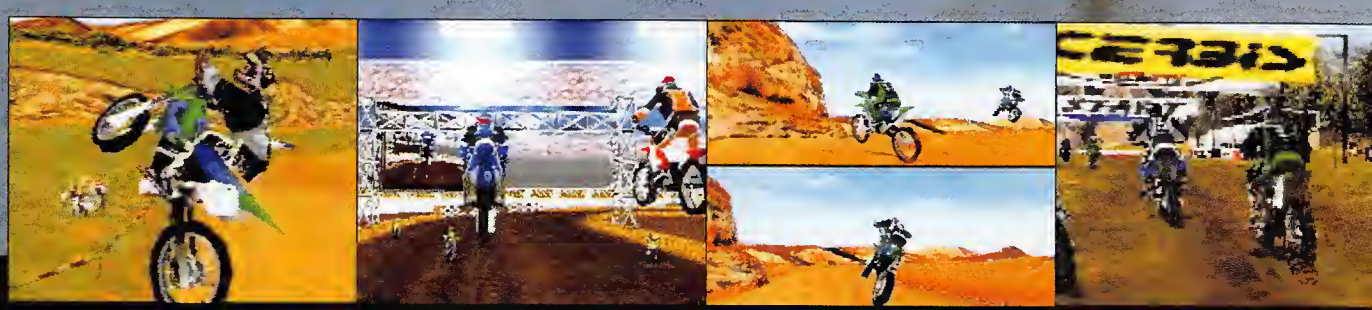


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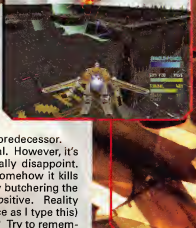
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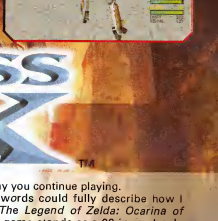
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Developers have large shoes to fill when attempting to re-create the magic they conjured up for a hit. *Street Fighter II*, *Final Fantasy II*, *Turok 2*, and *Lunar 2*—all have overshadowed their predecessors. These games are up there with movie sequels like *Aliens* and *Terminator 2*. So where's *Macross VF-X2* fit in? Well, the introductory cinematic is among the best for *any* game, PC or console; it's that good. It's a shame that the game doesn't match the quality of the opening cut-scene... or even its horrific predecessor.

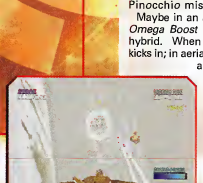
Sequels are supposed to be better than the original. However, it's a sad fact that sequels, as hard as they try, usually disappoint. Well, *VF-X2* goes way beyond disappointment. Somehow it kills two birds with one big-ass, yellow-stained stone by butchering the *Macross* license and being devoid of anything positive. Reality check: *VF-X2* is so bad (I wish you could see my face as I type this) that *VF-X1* looks good in comparison. How bad is it? Try to remember everything bad about first and second generation titles for the PlayStation: draw-in, broken seams, polygon dropout, pixelated textures, busted camera angles... *VF-X2* is a cornucopia of all those putrid elements of game design at best. C'mon, it can't be that hard to improve on a game, please tell me it can't. There are times in a reviewer's career when a game makes one appreciate video games, and there are times when a game can make you question why you continue playing.

No mere words could fully describe how I felt about *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. That game stands as a 99 in my book. At the same time, no mere words can sufficiently describe how awful *VF-X2* is. All the extra time for development was undoubtedly spent creating the killer intro. Two weeks before the last milestone, the team pulled out the trusty Yaroze and busted out a busted game. When you see the Pinocchio mission you will believe.

Maybe in an alternate universe, *VF-X2* could a good game—an *Omega Boost* meets *Ace Combat 3* meets *Gundam Side Story* hybrid. When you're in Fighter Mode, the *Ace Combat* engine kicks in; in aerial Battroid Mode, the *Omega Boost* style takes over; and whenever you're on foot, whether in Battroid or Guardian Mode, the *Gundam Side Story* style takes the helm. But in our universe, *VF-X2* wishes it was as good as *Ace Combat 3* or as dynamic as *Omega Boost*. Control is painful and gameplay is a goose egg. As such, *Macross VF-X2* ranks down there with *Toshinden 3*, *Newman Haas*, *Robocop 2*, *The Wizard of Oz 2*, and *Indiana Jones in the Temple of Doom*.







Cerberus will be back next month after his kamikaze mission involving a certain Macross *sequel and the Jaws of Life is complete.*

R REVIEW | CERBERUS: ROY FOKKER'S TURNING OVER IN HIS GRAVE... | DEVELOPER - EMOTION | PUBLISHER - BIG WEST | 1 PLAYER | AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN | VIEWPOINT SCORE • 25

COMING SOON

COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON

import









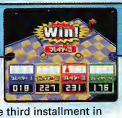


Bangaio (Treasure, Dreamcast) — Fresh off the N64, *Bangaio* is one of the strangest and most addicting shooters around. The DC version is also said to have undergone a graphical facelift, and did I mention it's a Treasure game? 'Nuff said!







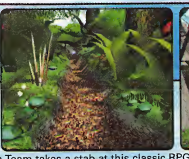




Chu Chu Rocket (Sega, Dreamcast) — The third installment in Sonic Team's upcoming DC lineup. An online puzzle game of sorts, *Chu Chu* sports simple (lag-free) graphics and comes packaged with a clear orange DC pad. Now, Sonic Team, where's *NiGHTS 2*?!









Phantasy Star Online (Sega, Dreamcast) — Sonic Team takes a stab at this classic RPG behemoth. Easily the most anticipated DC online game, this is a Genesis lover's dream come true!











Godzilla Maximum Impact (Dreamcast) — After the mess that was *Godzilla Generations*, few could believe a sequel was on the way. *Godzilla Maximum Impact* looks quite impressive, but will the control wind up busted again? Keep those fingers, err claws crossed!









Chocobo Stallion (Square, PlayStation) — Only Square can successfully land their overly-cute Chocobo character in nearly every genre known to man. But horse racing? I guarantee Eggo will love it!





Europa

ECTS'99

September is an exciting time for any video game fan: there's ECTS in London and at the end of the month, we get the big one... the Tokyo Game Show. *GameFan* was present at both, of course, but first we hit the main European event, ECTS '99, which was held during September 5-7 at the Olympia Exhibition Hall.

If nothing else, ECTS '99 proved that the video game industry is indeed in a healthy state, but the lack of new ideas and game concepts was desperately evident on the show floor, which was basically (with a few exceptions) a repeat of what was shown at E3. Several major players like Activision and EA decided to skip the event entirely... Well, okay, Activision did rent a small room for one day at a hotel nearby where it was possible to check out (if you found the hotel, that is) the company's amazing line-up of *games (Tony Hawk*... give... it... to... me... now). Eidos, GT Interactive, and Take 2 Interactive/Rockstar all had small private rooms where guests with appointments were allowed to see the latest developments.

Despite the lack of new games, Sega's Dreamcast launch and the behind-the-scenes PS2 developments were enough to attract a record-breaking amount of people to ECTS this year. Sega held its Dreamcast launch party at the old Commonwealth Centre, and I have to give major props to Sega since they got the actor who played Mini Me in the new *Austin Powers* movie to make an appearance... yeaahh, baby, YEAAHH!

Sega did the smart thing and let the games speak for themselves, rows upon rows of Dreamcast demopods were available for those who didn't spend their entire time at the bar (ahem!). *Sonic, Soul Calibur, Toy Commander, Expendable,* and *Power Stone* all put in an appearance, but one of the most striking games was the brand new demo of *Metropolis,* which wasn't supposed to be shown at the event. But since Sega liked Bizarre Creations' latest version so much, they decided to run the demo in a few machines... let me tell you that this game looks even better than *GT2000* on the PS2... yes, it looks that good...

The only negative is that *Metropolis* has been delayed due to a few factors. First, the lead programmer left Bizarre and now Martyn Chudley, MD of Bizarre has taken up the mantle of lead programmer, which is something he relishes. After a brief chat with the likable programmer, I found out that a few changes are being made in terms of gameplay, and even some of the code is being rewritten so the game will be even faster and better looking...

A lot of PlayStation 2 happenings and dealings were going on at the show, and certainly, almost all the developers have started, or are planning to, develop for Sony's new wonderbox. Lionhead is in the planning stages for a PlayStation 2 game, and Rage Software is developing a secret racing title with a certain Japanese company. At the Sony stand, the PlayStation 2 tech demos were being shown to those two people who still hadn't seen them.

The most amazing game of the show (err, or near the show floor) was without a doubt Peter Molyneux's *Black & White,* which was privately shown at a hotel nearby. We bore witness to a 15-minute demonstration that touched on maybe 0.2% of the game's features. The game is spectacular in so many ways that I don't have the space (or adjectives) to describe it. The PC version should be out early next year and there will be a console version, probably PS2.

Acclaim

One of the few big publishers who had a big presence at the show, Acclaim has a great lineup of games for all formats. The best news was that Bizarre Creations' *Furballs* is going to be published by Acclaim for the PC and Dreamcast and an unknown next-gen platform (which should be the PlayStation 2). *Trickstyle* was the main attraction on Acclaim's stand, but that's been covered to death anyway, so I'll end this paragraph with a cool rumor. Apparently a version of *Turok 3* coming out on Dolphin, was shown in some form at the show, and with Dave Dienstbier being hardly available for comment at the show, something was certainly going on...

Vanishing Point

Another low-key title at Acclaim's stand was Clockwork Games' racing game *Vanishing Point.* A jaw-droppingly good demo of the game was running on a few monitors, but details about the game were scarce. Some of the graphics in the running demo were so sharp and detailed that they had to be prerendered, but no, that's the latest 3D cards for you... or a next-gen platform.

Furballs

Besides *Metropolis,* Bizarre Creations is working on *Furballs* for Acclaim. A private demonstration was held for the game, and it was utterly convincing. *Furballs'* main antagonists are a bunch of super cool animals who also know how to get busy with big-ass weapons. Mix those with some puzzle-solving and very stylish, cartoon-like graphics and Acclaim has been very smart to snap this one up.

Codemasters

The premiere European publisher had a very strong showing with several good games, and the company is finally making inroads to the US market, as Activision is going to be publishing "Codie's" titles in the US. While *Colin McRae Rally 2* and the new *TOCA WTC* racing games are something European gamers are anxiously waiting for, *Prince Naseem Boxing* seems to be the game that will be Codemasters' big hit in the U.S. *TOCA WTC* will now be a PlayStation-only title, and, instead of only taking place at various British racing circuits, there will now be many international tracks like Laguna Seca and others.

Colin McRae Rally 2

Us Europeans love our rally games, and by far the best rally game so far on the PlayStation has been the original *Colin McRae Rally* which has been phenomenally successful in Europe and Japan—surely the sign of a great game. *Colin 2* still has a ways to go, as the game is not going to be released until spring next year. Lead designer and producer Gavin Wilder says, demonstrating the already amazing-looking game to a selection of journalists who came away breathless... PlayStation is indeed being taken to the next level.

Prince Naseem Boxing

Codemasters, Activision's (Codemasters' publisher in the U.S.) big hope for the U.S. market, *Prince Naseem* has taken a leaf out of *Ready 2 Rumble* in terms of flashy graphics and ease of playability. The version shown at ECTS played extremely well, the animation of the boxers is second to none and there's even visible damage after a few punches have been landed on your opponent's face. Besides Naseem himself, there's a huge variety of imaginative characters who are also playable. Couple this with an extensive Career mode and you have, potentially, the best console boxing game ever when it's released later this year.

Music 2000

The first music-making game has yet to be released Stateside, but a much, much improved sequel is on its way to a Christmas release in Europe. It's designed and created by Jester Interactive, whose founder is Tim Wright (formerly the Psygnosis in-house musician until he left to set up his own team). *Music 2000* has a new sound engine made from scratch inspired by Konami's excellent Bemani titles. This mode is entirely about jamming and having fun—there's no high score to attain. Each player triggers different riffs and sounds with their joypad, which results in a cacophony not far removed from ECM's dreaded ADS fits. As for the rest of the game, many more musical genres are included, from dub to trance and even country. There's tons more samples to use and a much improved interface. Apparently it will also be possible to sample your own sounds from CDs which is a great prospect.

Micro Machines 4

The creator of the *Micro Machines* series, Andrew Graham is back with the fourth installment, which dumps the racing vehicles and opts to use small, bi-ped creatures that hotfoot it around the tracks. The massive household environments look spectacular, and there are over 32 different racing tracks and eight racers (another four more are hidden). Gameplay is still pretty much the same as it has always been.

Infogrames

Infogrames also had a low-key presence at the show... only a small room filled with demo units, but the games were excellent. Rage Software's duo *UEFA Striker* and *Expendable* were great on the DC, even if the latter gets repetitive fast.

Alone In The Dark 4

A version of the much-anticipated *Alone In The Dark 4* was running at the show, but due to technical trouble it was not possible for us to see it. Infogrames is bringing the game on various formats: PC, DC and PlayStation at least, but the launch is still a year away.

Rally Masters

Another rally game is coming our way, this time from the Nordic masters Digital Illusions (responsible for *Motorhead* and *Pinball Illusions*). Rally Masters promises to have some of the best 3D graphics ever seen in a PlayStation racing game and tons of options. The early demo certainly looks awesome, and the gameplay was good too... could be huge in Europe.

Jet X

One of the games I was really eager to see was *JetX*, the brainchild of ex-Psygnosis developers now known as the Curly Monsters. The original designer of *Wipeout*, Nick Burcombe is heading up the development of *JetX*, which is a racing game with modern jetfighters mixed in with some combat elements. The demo that was shown of the game was early, but the speed and landscape details were amazing for a PlayStation game. The water effects, the graphics and the design of the game are very stylish and imaginative. The temp music tracks were spot-on for the racing action too. Expect much more on *JetX* in Europa very soon.

Psygnosis

Psygnosis is back on track after the rushed and flawed *F1'98*. The new version is being developed by System 33, and, just like the rest of the Liverpool coders (Bizarre Creations, Rage, and Hammerhead), they have crafted a staggering 3D engine for the PlayStation that handles 22 cars and complex backgrounds with ease. This 85% complete version had NO warping and it looked dead solid... Psygnosis is really showing other developers that there's plenty of life in the PlayStation... just take a look at *Wipeout 3* and *F1'99*.

A brand new designer and producer bring much-needed changes to the *Colony Wars* saga. The ECTS version of the game was amazing. As all the action looked good. There were a lot more ground missions this time, and the targeting system should be much more accurate, as should the briefings. Psygnosis did not confirm the rumor about a *Colony Wars* game being in development for the next-gen PlayStation, but we have it from a good source that design and conceptual work are well underway.

Virgin/Interplay

Unfortunately, Virgin's stand was situated in a small hall that felt more like a sauna than an exhibition area, I'm sure anyone who visited their stand has a bone to pick. Again, Shiny's *Messiah* took center stage, and according to Shiny's Scott Herrington, the game is going to ship this November for the PC with the console versions following closely thereafter. A surprise at the stand was Capcom's *Plasma Sword 2* on the Dreamcast; sadly the heat drove me away before I could get to grips with the game.

William Latham's Computer Artworks is one of the more interesting developers of late, and the company's first proper game, *Evolva*, was looking really good. Imagine a game very much like *Giants*, but with a very organic approach to design. Your main character evolves throughout the game by feeding on others, and the player can fool around with the development of his creatures. A very interesting concept, and while this is a PC game, it's hotly rumored to be a PS2 game also.

Ubi Soft

While *Rayman 2* looks too French to be fun (ECM's Note: well, he's Finnish, so what does he know), Ubi Soft had a great lineup with several Dreamcast titles in the pipeline to be released later this year including *Speed Devils*, *Allstare Racing*, and Criterion's much-anticipated *Deep Fighter*. The latter is a spectacular-looking underwater shooter with RTS bits and bolts tagged on. Criterion is really putting more effort in terms of game design into its titles, as proven by *TrickStyle*. May the gaming gods of Europe bless Ubi Soft, for they are bringing *Grandia* to Europe early 2000, complete with translation for the major markets of Spain, Germany, and France.

Konami

For the European gamers, there was only one game that mattered at Konami's small stand, and that was the soccer game *ISS Pro Evolution*, which is coming to the U.S. under the name of *MLS'99*. While the game still lacks real player names and teams, the player name editor and character creator modes are very welcome options, as is support for 4-players, finally!

The sequel to the Nintendo 64 *Castlevania* was also shown, and while the graphics aren't that much of an improvement over the first game, some of the gameplay looked a lot more exciting, with cool set-pieces and better controls. I'm also really happy to say that Konami is bringing its Bemani series to Europe. For those who don't know, the Bemani series includes all of Konami's awesome games like *Beatmania*, *Guitar Freaks*, and the new *Dance Revolution*. *Beatmania* is now a European edit, as some of the music has been changed to suit our market better. Doesn't sound like a good idea, but at least the game is coming out here.

Team17

Both Team17 and Microprose are now under the Hasbro umbrella, which should give both companies the financial security to develop even more killer games. One of the coolest games in the works from Team17 is *Stunt GP* for the Dreamcast. This awesome-looking game is very much like Acclaim's okay(ish) *ReVolt*, but with more colorful, arcade-like graphics. Gameplay felt sound and less fiddly than *ReVolt*.

SCi

Another behind-the-scenes deal was *SCi*. The publisher of the *Carmageddon* series not only has a new *Carma* game coming out but also a really cool-looking adventure game for the Dreamcast and PC called *Titanium Angels*, which is currently only six months in development. The game is being created by a new British team called Mobius, and the buzz on their first title is already excellent. In *Titanium Angels*, the player gets to control a female character called Carmen who has a sidekick in the form of Titan, a mechanoid. To make progress in this third person perspective adventure game, both characters must work together. The premise is certainly cool, and we can't wait for a demo.

Best of the Show

1. ISS Pro Evolution - Konami
2. Black & White - Lionhead & EA
3. Furballs - Bizarre Creations & Acclaim
4. JetX - Curly Monsters - Infogrames
5. Music 2000 - Jester Interactive - Codemasters

GameFan Sports

The best time of the year is upon us. Football and hockey are in full swing (go Petsl) and basketball is just starting up (Antoine, you suck). The World Series has just wrapped and the rollercoaster ride, which is the lot in life for a Red Sox fan, is mercifully over.

Joe Kidd won our fantasy baseball league, much to the chagrin of the rest of us. He can suck the fun outta any fantasy sport with his constant trades and shifty moves. Thank God that gambling on fantasy sports is illegal and never practiced by those here at GameFan because otherwise I would probably have to give him, say, 20 bucks otherwise.

This past October, yours truly was fortunate enough to go to the De La Hoya fight in Vegas. It was my first ever live boxing match and I must say that it was pretty cool. The reason I was there was to celebrate the release of Midway's *Ready 2 Rumble* and Interact's new line-up of peripherals. Many people have told me that the fight was garbage and that the fix was in but the fact of the matter is that Oscar danced around the ring like a wuss for four rounds and got his clock cleaned by Felix (did anyone else pick up on the fact that the names of the boxers were Felix and Oscar? I found that a bit funny and was miffed that there wasn't some sort of sheezy promotional angle or that). Face it people, the Golden Boy from East L.A. got beat.

Other highlights of the event included getting to leave the arena with Michael Keaton and laugh at the horrified look on his face as he was shuffled along like so much cattle, like the rest of us; man does he look haggard now. Oh and Mike, just "cause you're goin' bald doesn't make you any less of an actor... just a less paid actor. Don't worry though, I heard there is a sequel to *Gung Ho* in the works... but only if George Wendt commits.

As you can see, there is another company jumping into the competitive world of sports video games. FOX Interactive, who failed miserably to muscle their way in a few years ago, is back with a vengeance. Unloading the dead weight known to many as Gremlin, FOX has a new crop of titles and a new "attitude" (get it... FOX attitude... o.k. so I'm the only one that finds that clever and funny). While trying to compete with juggernauts like 989 Sports and EA is next to impossible, I contend that if there is one company that can give them a run for their money, it is FOX.

With their own networks, more cash than Hasbro and the televising rights to every major sporting event, FOX Sports Interactive should be able to carve itself a nice niche. While the product isn't on the level of either 989 or EA yet, never underestimate the influence of a good marketing campaign on the mainstream gamer (remember people *Knockout Kings* actually sold!). Heck, if Howie and Terry told me to buy *Superman*, I probably would...

With these two sports titles under their belt let's hope that they forego any more PlayStation versions of these games and get to work on PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast. The 128-bit systems are fertile grounds ripe for the scarring with a good sports software war.

Speaking of 128-bit sports titles, let me bring you up to speed on some of the upcoming Dreamcast sports titles. Next issue I will have reviews of *NBA 2K* as well as *NBA Showtime*; both of these titles look awesome—although I can tell you that *NBA 2K* isn't quite as impressive as *NFL 2K*. Black Box's *NHL 2K* is coming along, although the boys at Visual Concepts were brought in to help them finish the game. Also coming in the beginning of next year are *Virtua Striker* and *Virtual Tennis*. If those games don't spin your wheels, then maybe the coming of *World Series Baseball* will. Expect that puppy in time for Opening Day.

As an added bonus, this issue, we have a letter from our old cohort, Joe Kidd. He just wanted to drop us a line and let us know that he was still one of the peeps. Yeah, well if he is still one of the peeps, then where are all of our extra copies of *NFL 2K*, huh? Until next month, adios. —*El Nino*

The MLS is about as exciting to me as women's platform diving, but Germany versus Brazil is a whole other story. This *FIFA* rocks, with unbelievable motion capture, great control and the kind of kinetic energy that makes a great sports video game.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 6 — 91



The addition of MLS does little to persuade me that game has improved, but the motion capture and reworked graphical engine goes a long way. Ahhh...the joy of skunking every team in the world with Manchester United is true bliss.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 9 — 93

How I think about this game (which isn't very highly) matters little. It may be lacking in every department but the fact of the matter is that NASCAR fans will love it and there are so many of them, EA doesn't even need to cater to the rest of us.

G 7 C 7 P 6 M 5 O 6 — 68



Nascar fans, get your cars warmed up, EA's latest addition to the NASCAR franchise is a true winner and will easily keep any racing fan's mattie hot and steamy. It's worth the purchase, and if you have the money, go out and get it.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 7 — 87

Letter to El Niño:

What's up, big buddy? Long time since we hung out at the cave... It was good seeing you, though, at the Dreamcast launch shindig, even if you can only remember certain choice moments of the evening, and hey... if you needed me to fracas on the homeboy, you know I would have had your back. But, wrestler extraordinaire that you are, I'm sure you could handle your own. I still can't get over ECM—please tell him to keep the hat on—the hatless thing was downright scary, almost human-like...

So can you believe over $97 mill in a few scant hours? And over 500,000 units just a couple weeks later? Personally, I think the DC rocks—like I have to tell you that. I mean look at the games, for crying out loud: *Soul Calibur*, *Ready 2 Rumble*, *Power Stone*, a little *House* action, a little *Bass* trolling, and ahem... how 'bout that *NFL 2K*, huh, boys?

Look, I may not have the honor of gracing the *GF* pages on a regular basis any more, but I want everyone to know I'm still thinking of you. Remember it was me that said stay away from anything *VR*. It was me that proclaimed Maximum Passing the ultimate *Madden*-killing feature in '97. And it was Niño and I that brought you the biggest, baddest two-issue sports book, *GSN*, that you will ever see—all the rest of the posers can bow down.

But as you all know, I've moved on. Don't call it a comeback... Joe Kidd's still around, beating down people left and right in fantasy leagues across the globe. But I work in a lab now—a lab called Visual Concepts—a lab that makes some nasty, NASTY games. Which brings me back to *NFL 2K*. Remember how I said I hadn't forgot about my peeps? I still recall my *GF* days when I daydreamed and wrote about a sports game that would someday deliver a good balance of gameplay **and** looks: not "beautiful, but annoying," not "masterful AI, but drives like a boat." Instead, I wanted "looks and plays like an absolute dream." Now come on... did I let you down? I spent so much energy pointing out what was wrong with games it was time for me to put up or shut up. I hope you readers out there think Visual Concepts and myself put together a pretty damn good game. I know El Niño thinks so (maybe it's coming time for him to put up or shut up). Just wanted to let you GameFan sports readers know that I may no longer be covering games with a passion, but making games with a passion.

All right fellas, I don't mean to get carried away, but seriously, do yourself a favor and go get this game. It was made for all of you—the *GameFan* faithful—the masses of you who put up with unoriginal and mediocre sports titles. You suffered, and I shared your pain. Hopefully the games I make will exhibit the same flair, originality and quality that I strove for when I worked at GameFan. **—Joe Kidd**

A LITTLE SOMETHIN' FOR THE PEOPLE: NFL 2K FROM VISUAL CONCEPTS PUBLISHED BY SEGA OF AMERICA



Hockey, no matter how bad or good it looks, is always fun. FOX Sports first run on the ice may not be the best looking, but hey, it's not that bad. At any rate, if you're a big fan of the sport, and you've already picked up *FaceOff*, grab *NHL Championship 2000*.

G 9 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 2 **81**



NHL Championship 2000
PlayStation
FOX Sports

A commendable first effort by FOX's start-up sports division. It can't hang with FaceOff or NHL (yet) but it shows the kind of promise that will keep people from writing them off. Definitely worth a look if you are a fan of the sport. Who knows, you may even prefer it to the Big Two.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 6 O 6 **71**

What a miserable basketball game. No offense to FOX Sports, but seriously, these guys need to hit the gym and work on this title, maybe hold a practice or somethin'. With bigger and better hoop games on the way, if I were you, I'd hold off grebbing this one. To be fair, I'd rent it first.

G 6 C 6 P 6 M 6 O 6 **61**



NBA Basketball 2000
PlayStation
FOX Sports

While FOX hockey is a great cornerstone for a burgeoning hockey franchise, hoops needs some serious work. The engine just isn't up to snuff and the shooting mechanics suck. The presentation is solid, but when is the last time someone said they played a game because of the presentation?

G 6 C 6 P 6 M 6 O 6 **62**

It's been a long time since we've seen a good fishing sim on the PS. Finally, after months of waiting, Agetech delivers a fishing simulation that will straighten out any one of your hooks. Fishing fans, pack up your tackle box, this one's a keeper.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 7 **79**



Bass Landing
PlayStation
Agetec

This game gets points for just *being* a fishing title. Better than the rest of the PlayStation titles of its ilk, *Bass Landing* plays like a lazy day on the lake. Unfortunately the lack of depth and a good RPG angle keep it from getting outta the novelty zone.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 7 **73**

NHL Championship 2000

Review

Developer: Radical Available: Now
Publisher: Fox Sports # of Players: 1-8

It's a little late in the game to be diving into the cut-throat world of video sports development, but if there ever was a company that had the necessary muscle to pull it off, it would be FOX. After an unimpressive attempt at getting into video games a couple of years ago (something they will freely admit), FOX is back with a better business plan... and better games.

The first of the new titles is *NHL Championship 2000*. Developed by Radical, this is a solid and competent foray into the world of hockey simulation. Some may cringe at my choice of words to describe *Championship*, saying that it is just a nice way of saying "better luck next time;" but this is not true. While Radical is the developer that gave us *NHL Powerplay*, one of the best 32-bit hockey sims, this is not the same team, for the most part. For this reason I will not treat *Championship* as a sophomore opus, but instead as a first attempt by some knowledgeable puck-heads.

Some good graphics and intuitive gameplay anchor *Championship*. The AI is likewise a highlight and the stat-tracking makes playing worthwhile. There are problems, however, with the commentary, and some of the rules changes for the 99/00 season. While the NHL will feature 4-on-4 overtime periods and new crease rules, *Championship* has failed to implement them. This is a bit careless considering that other titles have shipped earlier this fall and managed to get the changes in there—but it's far from debilitating.

What hamstrings *NHL Championship* is that it's entering one of the toughest sports genres, a solid four years behind the competition. How can you possibly compete with the likes of EA, out of the gate? You can't; heck, it took 989 until this year just to catch them. All things considered though, FOX has delivered a game that will satisfy idle fans as well as make a sturdy base on which to build a franchise. Certainly worth a rental; for some, maybe even a purchase. **EN**









NHL 2000

Review

Developer: EA Canada Available: Now
Publisher: EA Sports # of Players: 1-8

Well, it sure is faster this year. *NHL* has always been my fortunate son, delivering the only hockey experience worth my time (or any other fan of this most wonderful sport). This year, however, the unthinkable happened: 989 Sports actually produced a great hockey title of their own. With blistering speed and unsurpassed control, *NHL FaceOff 2000* quickly catapulted itself to the top of my list. Can this year's NHL installment compete?

That was a rhetorical question, if you couldn't figure it out. Of course *NHL 2000* can compete. What consistently remains the best of the EA Sports line-up, *NHL 2000* has everything a fan could want. The question is (and this isn't rhetorical) "Is it anything that wasn't already given to us in last year's version?"

Alas, there is little here that wasn't seen in *NHL 99*. With AI that was already unrivaled, deep stat-tracking, and some excellent control, there was very little that they could even come up with, save updated rosters, that wasn't already in there.

Sure I could rattle off the laundry list of minor improvements and additions, but it isn't likely to matter since almost none of those improvements are readily visible in the game. The graphics are a tad better and the game speed has been much improved (not quite as fast as *FaceOff 2000*, but close), but fighting still sucks and the commentary, one of my favorite parts of the game, actually got worse. The new color commentator makes me wish they had gotten Cammy Granato to do it. Yikes! What was wrong with last year's guy?

I want to avoid sounding lackluster about this title because that would be misleading. *NHL 2000* is still a stellar game, and I love to play it. It seems that this franchise has gone as far as it is going to go on 32-bit. With any hope, the next *NHL* we see will be on the PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast... let EA Canada really show us what they are capable of and stop compelling us to shell out $50 for games we have already played. **EN**









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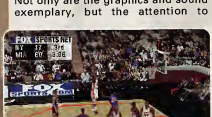
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NBA Basketball 2000









Review

Developer: Radical Publisher: Fox Sports

Available: Now # of Players: 1-8

While *NHL Championship 2000's* debut is impressive, *NBA Basketball 2000* leaves much to be desired. Entering a genre already dominated by *Live* and *Shootout*, FOX needed to bring their "A" game in order to turn heads. Yet, this feels more like they mailed in their effort.

The veteran *NBA Live* is an outstanding example of what can be accomplished on the PlayStation. Not only are the graphics and sound exemplary, but the attention to detail, possible only after years of refinement, is also meticulous. *Basketball 2000* does not have this luxury... and it shows. While the graphics and commentary are acceptable, you can't help but feel that this game suffers from rookie mistakes. From little things like the lack of a deep library of moves, to bigger issues involving the shooting mechanics, *Basketball 2000* seems incomplete.

The problem with the shooting mechanic stems from the lack of an intuitive jump shot. Unlike all other hoops titles where releasing the ball at the top of your jump increases the odds of the ball going in, with *Basketball 2000*, all you do is tap the button. Where's the fun or skill in that?

One thing that *Basketball 2000* has is great T.V.-style presentation. From replays and sub-ins to commentary and camera angles, the look and feel is unmistakably FOX. The familiarity will certainly be welcome to some gamers.

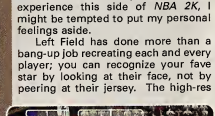
Still, *FOX Basketball 2000* needed a little more in order to get into the same ballpark as *ShootOut* and *Live*. Once again, getting into the PlayStation scene this late seriously handicaps its chances of carving a niche. My advice? Dive into Dreamcast and PS2 now, while the territory is still virgin. **EN**

NBA Courtside 2









Preview

Developer: Left Field Publisher: Nintendo

Available: Now # of Players: 1-4

Anything featuring Kobe Bryant, the most arrogant player on the court, immediately sours my palate. However, considering that this baller from Left Field looks like it will be the most complete basketball experience this side of *NBA 2K*, I might be tempted to put my personal feelings aside.

Left Field has done more than a bang-up job recreating each and every player; you can recognize your fave star by looking at their face, not by peering at their jersey. The high-res graphics are downright gorgeous, making it a joy to watch. The facial animations are amazing, and the super-smoove motion captured moves are quite lifelike. The realism is augmented by the graphics, but the real meat of the sim atmosphere comes from the full 1999 roster, the advanced artificial intelligence (which is, at times, absolutely maddening), and the amazing list of moves (four times as many as the original *Courtside*), which includes signature moves for specific players. The play-by-play action is called by the Lakers' announcing team, Chick Hearn and Stu Lantz.

The sim mode seems to be tip top, but Left Field has also included an arcade mode that plays like a very lifelike version of *NBA Jam*. The arcade mode features fast-paced action and incredible moves like monster three-point dunks, "sonic boom" dunks, and outrageous passes. Also tossed in for good measure is a nifty create-a-player mode that allows you to customize your own team, and a career mode where you can "power up" a custom player based a game style and accomplishments.

Left Field didn't throw a brick with their last *NBA Courtside* game and we don't expect them to miss this time out, either. *Courtside 2* has all the makings for an instant champ, and as soon as a finished copy lands in our corner, we'll have the full review for you. **6th Man**

NASCAR 2000

Review

Developer: Stormfront Available: Now
Publisher: EA Sports # of Players: 1-2

So what do you want me to say? It's a NASCAR racing sim, plain and simple. For the most part, you drive around an oval at 185 mph, only inches off the bumper of the car in front of you. So where do you stand on the sport of NASCAR?

If you're one of the millions of rabid fans around the country, this is your cup of tea. You have 33 of the sport's best drivers (go Ricky Rudd!); commentators Bob Jenkins and Benny Parsons; and 18 official tracks including Michigan, Indianapolis, and Homestead (you know, the place that was wiped from the face of the Earth by that hurricane 10 years ago).

Whether you want to go hard-core or basic, *NASCAR 2000* will suit your needs. You can customize your car, utilize pit stops and master drafting, or you can just sit back and enjoy an arcade style race. If you tire of just driving around in a circle, you can try out the five fantasy courses which, brace yourself, introduce turns to NASCAR racing. These road courses aren't exactly the Autoban, but they sure beats driving around an oval all the time.

The game does feature a solid engine, boasting some good speed and some clean graphics. The commentary is sparse, but adequate, and the pit crew comments add some need flavor. All of this will satiate fans of the sport but are far from the necessary components needed to maintain the interest of any other gamers. Like in real life, if you don't already "get it," you ain't gonna "get it." **EN**











Bass Landing

Review

Developer: ASCII Available: Now
Publisher: Agetec # of Players: 1

Yes, another fishing game! And yes, I am stoked. As long as there are still rednecks and college stoners (hmmm, I wonder what category I would fall into there?), fishing games will continue to sell. It's a sad truth though that the pickins are slim, leaving said rednecks and stoners yearning for more. *Super Black Bass* is the title I harken back to when I reminisce about my days in the fraternity house, zoning out in my friend's room, trolling for the ever elusive lunker. Good times...

Well it isn't *Super Black Bass*, but it's still a title worth checking out. *Bass Landing*, utilizing the handy fishing rod controller, is just the type of recliner experience we all love to indulge in from time to time.

The gameplay is not as good as I would have liked it to be and the RPG element is not as deep (ok, it isn't deep at all) as I'd prefer, but *Bass Landing* manages to fuse snappy graphics and interesting fishing techniques into an amusing title.

While it is just fishing, limiting the amount of extras I can tell you about that you don't already know are in there (jeez, are there gonna be different lakes and lure?), I should mention the practice mode. Stop the presses people, this is a practice mode you actually want to play! I know, it sounds crazy, but it's true. The practice mode features a series of fishing lessons that, if successfully completed, will reward the angler with special lures and other goodies. These lessons get hard fast though, so you can bet that you'll spend a ton of time trying to make the grade.

Bass Landing is a game all fishing fans will want to check out, as well as the occasional listless gamer looking for something different. It still isn't where I'd like it to be, but after having played some of the other garbage on the market (*Bass Fishing* excluded), beggers can't be choosers. **EN**









Cyber Tiger









Developer: EA Sports Available: Nov.
Publisher: EA Sports # of Players: 1-4

Preview

So you spent the equivalent of the Gross National Product of Martinique on securing the licensing rights of über-star Tiger Woods; what do you do with it? Me? I'd have *Tiger Golf*, *Tiger-Fu*, *Tiger Strike*, *Tiger Tank: The New Reich* and *Tiger Does Dallas*. While it may be a little while before we see any of those concepts, you can bet that EA is gonna be making all sorts of golf titles. The newest is *CyberTiger*, an arcade golfing experience that looks geared-up to go head-to-head with Sony's *Hot Shots 2*.

The lush graphics and cartoon-style players definitely lend themselves to a less serious golfing experience. To cater to the idle fan and more action-oriented gamer, *CyberTiger* will be a one button affair, briskly paced so that no 18 holes will go longer than a half hour. There will still be plenty of advanced options to implement as well, such as ball spin, bump and runs, and power shots—the bread and butter of any good *Hot Shots* player. Much of the standard stuff will be included, from secret characters and bonus courses to the ability to track career stats and create-a-golfer. Since *CyberTiger* is an arcade game, power-ups and power balls are also included to add flare.

In this preview state, it is clear that *CyberTiger* still has a way to go before it can compete with *Hot Shots*. While the aforementioned graphics are cool and the gameplay solid, the engine still struggles, resulting in some major choppiness. All of the lush coloring in the world can't hide that.

CyberTiger has major potential and will undoubtedly benefit from Mr. Woods' smiling face. Question is, can it shape up enough to compete with the likes of *Hot Shots*? Now how about that *Tiger-Fu*? **EN**

FIFA 2000











Developer: EA Sports Avoiloble: Foll
Publisher: EA Sports # of Players: 1-8

Review

If you were ever fortunate enough to see the 3DO version of *FIFA Soccer*, you know what a revelation it was. Incredible graphics for the time, combined with excellent game-play, made it a memorable title in less than memorable times.

Electronic Arts has decided to go back to those days, and has almost totally revamped the FIFA license for 2000, adding many new features; just to give it that special 'kick.' They began by motion capturing some of the world's greatest Soccer players (including England's Sol Campbell) and then redesigned the game's engine. This really shows in the graphical area, where players will try several new moves out; such as holding off an opponent with a straight arm.

Also evident from the title, is the new influence of Major League Soccer. Containing all 12 teams and over 250 players of the MLS, you can play as any one of your favorite domestic college graduates or retired foreign players. You can also expect commentary from U.S. Women's team member Julie Foudey (along with 4 others), to give you that real soccer feel.

For those who like the world game, there are 15 leagues (complete with league and Cup play), full international and classic teams from the past. You can choose any 2 teams in the game to play a single exhibition, setting up interesting match-ups like Manchester United versus the L.A. Galaxy.

With a release date scheduled for this fall, *FIFA 2000: Major League Soccer* is the best *FIFA* since the 3DO version. **6th Man**

Formula 1 1999

Developer: Studio 33 **Available: Nov.**
Publisher: Psygnosis **# of Players: 1-2**

Preview

In the world of automobile racing, there's nothing more spectacular or intense as Formula One racing. Imagine barreling down one of the world's most famous courses at a speed of nearly 200 mph, just centimeters off the ground. Chances are, you and I will never experience this unbelievable rush in person... so thank god for games!

With the PlayStation 2 looming, I figured *Gran Turismo 2* would be the last major PS racer... boy, was I wrong. It's not often that I'll toss aside my Dreamcast pad in exchange for a Dual Shock. But *Formula One 99* is just that amazing. Visually, it's on par with *GT2*—everything from the freakish field of view (two miles!!) to the near nonexistent drawin. You could actually hear my jaw hit the floor when a Psygnosis rep (parking his vehicle in an ideal locale) showed us how far you could actually see in the distance... and all this madness just days after I purchased *Monaco GP* on the DC... argh!

The real beauty, however, in *F199* is the varying level of difficulty. F1 games of this caliber usually require an insane learning curve. In my eyes (I tend to shy away from heavy sims), that just does not make for a fun time. So Studio 33 has seen fit to include both hard-core simulation elements and the option to tone the realism down quite a bit. Moving too fast... not going to make turn... brake assist, save me!

What F1 game would be complete without an all-star driver lineup? All of the 1999 drivers have made the cut, and that includes Michael Schumacher and his broken leg. If you start the season out with Ferrari's golden boy, you'll notice after the Grand Prix of Britain (Silverstone's the track on which Michael ate it) Schumacher's replacement will take the wheel. Of course, if you'd rather play god and pretend like the crash never took place, you can choose to race with Schumacher for the entire season. Psygnosis has really given players the ultimate authority in *F199*.

Take one look at the shots of *Gran Turismo 2000* or the extremely early pics of *Shin Ridge Racer* and it becomes quite obvious that the PS' days are numbered. In the meantime, feast your eyes on these killer shots of *F199*—it's one the best-looking 32-bit racers I've seen. *Gran Turismo 2* meet *F199*... let the competition begin! **Fury**

> ***"...nearly 200 mph, just centimeters off the ground..."***









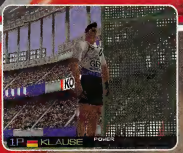








Int'l. Track & Field 2000





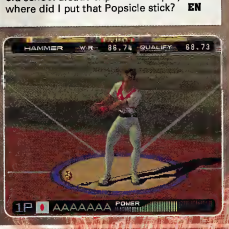












Developer: Konami
Publisher: Konami

Available: Winter
of Players: 1-4

Preview

Ah, it certainly is nice to see another *Track & Field* game from Konami. Button-mashing arcade sports at its best—speed and timing are all that matter in this hallowed franchise. Oh the early days, when I would bring a popsicle stick to the arcade and jury-rig myself the ultimate rapid-fire mechanism... blister central!

There were moments of trepidation, however, when I first loaded it up. Haunting memories of *Nagano* still fill my dreams with flashes of horrible graphics and gameplay—impressions that are forever burned into my fragile, gaming mind. Could *IT&F 2000* be as bad as that? Frankly, yes, it could... The loading screen gave way to the menu, and I wondered what lay in store...

Thankfully, *IT&F 2000* looks to be a return to the days of glory past. Playing this version immediately brings back happy, button-mashing memories showcasing graphics, sound, and gameplay readily recognizable as belonging to an *IT&F* title.

> *"IT&F looks to be a return to the days of glory past..."*

Twelve events will be included in *IT&F 2000*, ranging from mainstays such as the men's long jump and javelin, to less popular (but no less interesting) events such as kayaking, women's springboard, and cycling. As you'd expect from a game in this series, success hinges solely on the speed of your fingers and the timing of your actions.

Like in past titles, you'll be able to record best times and scores and choose which country to represent (what, no entries from Luxembourg?). Nationalists rejoice; all of the characters have been detailed to give them the looks unique to their homeland—the Canadian guy even wears a Mountie hat (ok, I made that up, but wouldn't it be cool if each character was grossly stereotyped? Imagine, the American guy had a 90210 shirt, the French dude ran with a baguette, the British guy had bad teeth... oh the possibilities!).

The only problem I foresee *IT&F 2000* having is one inherent to every title in this franchise: replay value. Sure it's a blast to compete with three of your buddies to see who can get the best scores, but where's the one player game? With the flood of action/adventures and RPGs coming to the PlayStation, it'll be refreshing to have an old school arcade experience to play. Now where did I put that Popsicle stick? **EN**



INSANE.
FRENZIED.
TOTAL
TAG-TEAM
CHAOS!

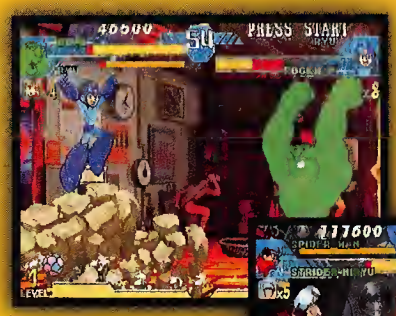
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T TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

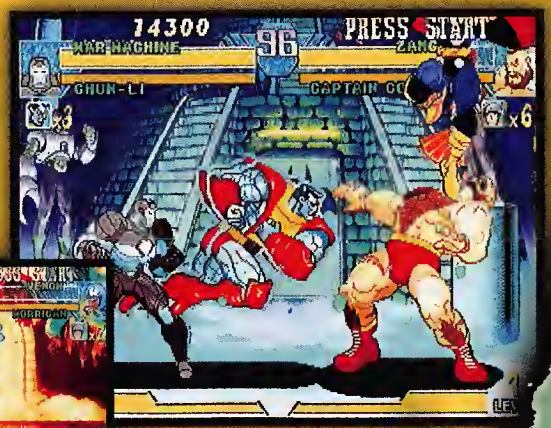
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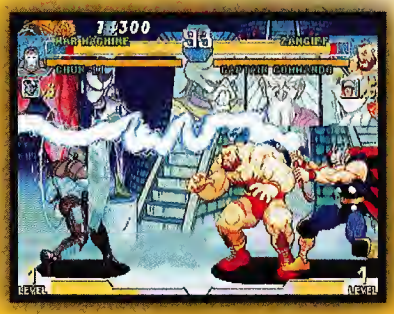


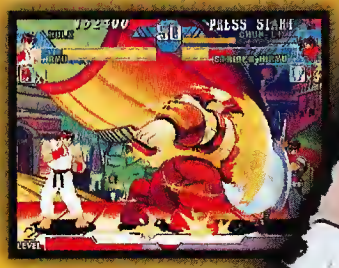




MARVEL VS. CAPCOM

CLASH OF SUPER HEROES





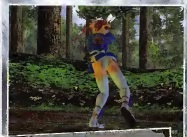
Imagine the battle: Spider-Man vs. Mega Man...Incredible! Or, who would stand victorious in Strider vs. Captain America? Amazing! Now Capcom's #1 smash arcade fantasy fighter comes to the Sega Dreamcast! Experience the world's most amazing battles between your favorite legendary Capcom characters and super heroes of the Marvel Universe.

Supports 4-player simultaneous play for the most explosive tag-team matches ever!

Sega Dreamcast.

Quarter Crunchers

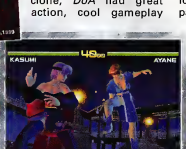
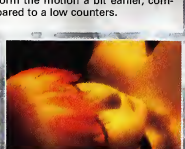
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DEAD

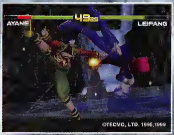
Let's cut to the chase here... big breasts sell, and so does intense action. Just ask any *KoF* player why he started playing an SNK game, and you'll find an interesting correlation between beginners and fighting games starring Mai ("me bouncy!"). And while *Dead or Alive* didn't receive worldwide acclaim and popularity, it was recognized as a decent 3D fighter with three unique features. The first was the "Hold" button which reversed an enemy's attack. The second was the "Danger Zones." If a character was knocked off his feet and landed in this zone, it was juggle combo heaven. Lastly, not only did all the female characters have excellent attributes, but their other assets were hypnotic as well. In other words, while it's still a *VF2* clone, *DoA* had great action, cool gameplay features, and great-looking, scantily-clad fighting babes. So, when I had the chance to preview the beta of *DoA2*, you can bet good dangos I was all over it.

"...60 fps action, colorful character designs, and incredibly detailed backgrounds..."

Running on the powerful Naomi hardware, *Dead or Alive 2* changes a few things from the original. First, the "Hold" button from the original is now the "Free" button, which acts as a block button, a counter button, and a 3D movement button. Counters are now much harder to perform than in *DoA*; instead of just tapping the counter button along with a simple joystick motion, you now have to input a rather difficult sequence (i.e. back, forward, quarter circle up + Free button). The timing for counters is different as well; for high counters, you need to perform the motion a bit earlier, compared to a low counters.









DEAD OR ALIVE 2



New to the *DoA* series is the ability to move in 3D, which can be done two ways. First, you can simply sidestep by tapping up + the Free button, or tapping down, down + the Free button. The sidestepping is similar to *Tekken 3*, in which you really have to time it at the last moment in order to avoid attacks. Second, you can freely sidestep continuously, similar to *Soul Calibur*'s "8-Way Run." Perform the sidestep motion and continue to hold the Free button while moving the joystick in the desired direction. This allows players full freedom of movement throughout the stages. And with stages this big, you'll need to move around a lot.

DoA2 has done away with the juggle-happy "Danger Zone," and instead replaced it with huge stages that are all interactive. It can be as simple as knocking an opponent off a platform or backing 'em into a specific spot. Not all stages have interactive backgrounds; while in Tag Team mode, you fight in an enclosed arena with electrical fencing. Yup, there's a single player mode and a tag team mode. You can only tag your teammate in when an opponent is knocked down or into the air. Similar to *Tekken Tag Tournament*, you can set up some awesome-looking air juggles.



Living up to the hype, *DoA2* features some kickass 60 fps action, colorful character designs, and incredibly detailed backgrounds. Similar to the *VF3* backgrounds which drew "oohs" and "aahs," every stage in *DoA2* has monstrous amounts of detail, whether it's the carpet of the indoor balcony arenas, the stained-glass windows of the tower, or the incredible environmental effects. These effects are so realistic, they're "soil yourself" quality: the ripples when fighting in water, the snow which flies when bodies hit the turf, the random drops of water when fighting next to a waterfall...



Sound awesome? Well, keep in mind that since the version I played was only 50% complete, there were still a few bugs and glitches. First off, there are some Z-buffering glitches with the clothing, and backgrounds can block the view of characters sometimes. Slowdown also happens when a lot of action and environmental effects fill the screen at the same time. Camera angles switch at any time, which can affect gameplay at the most inopportune of moments. But my biggest gripe is the "Free" button. Setting a single button to take care of three types of commands is not very intuitive. Problems arise if a player wants to move around in 3D and counter at the same time. I'd rather see a four-button layout, the fourth button being your 3D-movement button.

In any case, *DoA2* is still testing, and I'm sure that Tecmo will fix these few flaws by the time the game's released. There's no date yet for *DoA2* in the U.S., but we'll keep you posted when *DoA2* finally *busts out*, with a full review to come. **Dangohead**











Quarter Crunchers
AMOA Special!!!

EMERGENCY CALL AMBULANCE

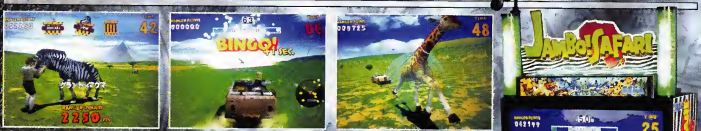
Similar to Fox's lineup of *World's Scariest Things to Watch Whether It's Police Chases or People Getting Run Over*, Sega has started a Real Life Adventure series. And while *Crazy Taxi* and *Brave Firefighters* hardly represent the realities of their respective occupations, *Emergency Call Ambulance*, Sega's newest addition to the Real Life Adventure series, is a serious arcade game simulating the high-speed life of a paramedic.

Each level in *Emergency Call Ambulance* starts off with an interesting story detailing the events of your mission, complete with 3D sequences. As soon as the game begins, you're given barely enough time to get to the hospital to deliver your patient. The trick in this game is you CANNOT hit anything, whether it's a lamppost or a pothole. Every time you run into something which slows you down, the patient will suffer from different conditions, including shock, ventricle fibrillation, blood loss, and more. Every time this happens, your time will be reduced, making it even harder to get to your destination on time. And since there's no option to continue if you run out of time, try your best to get the victim to the hospital, lest you hear the dark voice of little Jack crying, "I don't wanna die!" (First time I heard that, I felt like the biggest shmuck on the planet).



Running on SEGA's hardware of choice, *Emergency Call Ambulance* shines on the Naomi board. While there are not too many special effects in the game, all the environments look true to life. A good-looking arcade game with a serious theme isn't typical, but I hope that people take the time to play this true-to-life game.





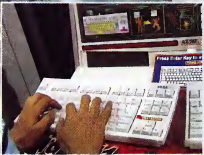
JAMBO SAFARI

Select from four different researchers and take to the African Serengeti in your dependable jeep. Travel through plains, shallow rivers, and deserts areas as you track down all sorts of animals for your research. The goal is to capture the required amount of critters in order to move to the next stage. Capturing animals involves some buckaroo-like lassoin' skills, so you Elmer Fudd-types can stow the 12 gauge and try your hand at hunting with a kindler, gentler, err... um... item. Doesn't sound fun to you? Well, then you're in for a shock cuz *Jambo Safari* is one darn fun arcade game.

Controls are quite simple; you have a steering wheel, gas and brake pedal, and the lasso lever. The lasso lever is pretty simple to use; get close enough to an animal, and two circles (one larger than the other) will appear. Try your best to line up both circles together, then push the lasso lever forward. If your aim is good, you'll lasso the animal! Now, you have to tire the animal so it slows down for you to throw the bolo net over it. To fatigue the creature, pull back on the lasso lever. This will pull the animal towards you and slow it down, but be wary of the tension of your rope. Once the beast is close to you at this point, the camera will zoom into a cockpit view and a circle and crosshair will appear. Line these two displays up to accurately throw the bolo net on your target and WHAM! While this sounds relatively easy, many creatures are faster than you are, and some are very tricky, circling around and heading right into you! For the speedier creatures, you can also double tap the gas pedal to get a boost of acceleration for a few seconds. Without a doubt, I enjoyed this game the most at the show.







TYPING OF THE DEAD

Alright, alright... I know everyone is looking at me strange for even including this game in the AMOA lineup. Yes, it's a typing game where you type either letters (or, later, words and even phrases) to "shoot" at the enemies. Yes, there's a keyboard attached to the game. Yes, it is essentially *House of the Dead 2*. But contrary to what you'd expect, *Typing of the Dead* is most definitely a bizarre, yet interesting, game.

For those who are unfamiliar with the series, *House of the Dead* and *House of the Dead 2* are gun games in which you venture into a house and fire away at the undead. Well, Sega has decided to put a strange twist on this formula... because instead of shooting zombies with a gun, each enemy now has either a letter or word(s) in a square-shaped bubble over it. Typing the proper letters will demolish the monster, and while this seems pretty easy, there are some pretty hard phrases that pop up. Unfortunately, if you make a mistake in a phrase, it doesn't automatically start you from the beginning, which makes the game pretty easy for any 30 wpm (words per minute) typist, and anybody who can type faster might just be bored with this game. The game is essentially *House of the Dead 2*, and, through the magic of NAOMI, it still looks amazing, even if the game is nearly a year old.

Still, the game offers a dynamic twist on the classic action game, and the bosses are very challenging. I could definitely see a Dreamcast and even a PC port of this game, and if you can teach kids to type while entertaining them with decapitated zombies, why not? *Typing of the Dead* may or may not show up on domestic shores, but don't be surprised if you see a keyboard at your local arcade soon.





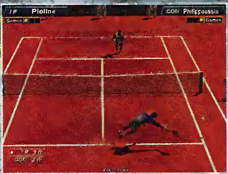


VIRTUAL TENNIS

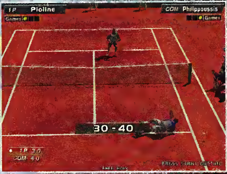
Let's get something straight here... Football is great, basketball is exciting, but when it comes to a real Man's sport, it's tennis. That's right, I know your jaws are hangin' below your knees and your eyeballs are rollin' on the ground. But I'm not talking about the white clothing wearing, country club, yuppie types with their haughty "Oh, Bonnie, you look so dainty in that new tennis skirt" accents. No, my dear readers, I'm talking about smackin' a 100mph serve down the line, diving for a volley at the net, and blastin' a passing shot down the line for a winner. I'm talking about grinding your feet deep into the clay courts for better grip when running, dealing with random bounces off the grass, and the bad linecalls. It's too bad there aren't more tennis games like *Virtual Tennis* from Sega, but then again, I don't expect anyone else to make a tennis game properly.



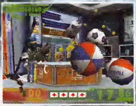
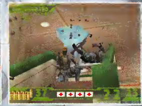
Choose from eight tennis players, all of whom are real life players. You can choose the serve and volley style of Cedric Pioline, the backcourt blasting power of Carlos Moya, or the tenacity of Jim Courier. Matches are 'best out of three' sets, so you won't be playing very long matches. Control is a very simple joystick + two button setup; one button for normal ground strokes, the other for lobs. Like all Naomi games, *Virtual Tennis* is an awesome-looking game; viewed from afar, you'll think you're watching a tennis match on television. The control is very good, and I like the timing-based system of hitting; hit a shot too early or late, and it will have less power and precision than one that is hit with the right timing. My only complaint is that you can win most games using the serve and volley, even on clay. However, this is probably the best tennis game I've ever played, and I highly recommend trying *Virtual Tennis* when it whizzes onto the arcade scene.



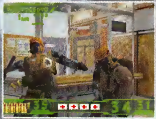






CRISIS ZONE






While the show was dominated by Sega, Namco featured their newest addition to the *Time Crisis* series. *Crisis Zone* was in full effect, and while only 60% done, the game shows potential to be the best gun game this year.

Proudly displaying Namco's standard of excellence, *CZ* lets you take your gun and send all comers to their virtual graves. The novelty of Namco's gun games is the pedal button; pushing the pedal will make you hide behind a wall, giving you time to reload and avoid enemy gun fire. *Crisis Zone* builds upon this, giving the character a riot shield that you can hide behind. Another departure from the standard format is the inclusion of a sub-machinegun rather than the semi-automatic handgun with the slide motion. While I miss the kick of the handgun, there's something about having a fully automatic gun in your hands that makes you forget the handgun quite easily.

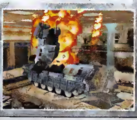
Running on Namco's System 23 hardware, *Crisis Zone* is slightly enhanced to handle the multiple particle effects in the game. And when I mean particle effects, I mean you can blast anything and it'll shatter into a million pieces. Similar to Sega's *N.Y. Gunblade*, it's a true blast-a-thon as anything and everything can be blown to itty-bitty shards.

While only two levels were complete at the show, *Crisis Zone* should be out by the end of the year in arcades everywhere. As far as a two-player game, it doesn't look like *Crisis Zone* will have the "partner" option found in *Time Crisis 2*. But even without two-player mode, *Crisis Zone* will definitely be one of the most popular arcade games this year.







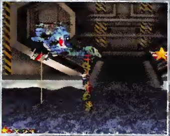

PREHISTORIC ISLE 2

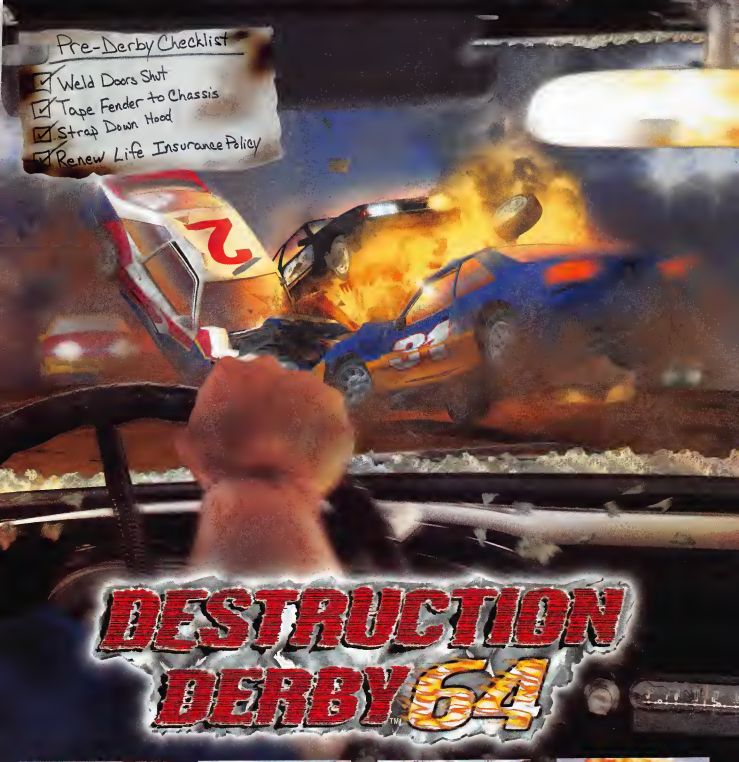
Yeah, Sega has Naomi power, Namco has its System 23 muscle, but there's something to be said for old hardware that stands the test of time. And no one can deny the longevity of SNK's Neo Geo hardware, as made apparent by SNK's latest shooter, *Prehistoric Isle 2*.



Part *Choplifter*, part *Jurassic Park*, *PI2* gives you a selection of two different helicopters. Your job is to wander deep into an island where a research experiment with dinosaurs has gone terribly awry. Rescue civilians on the island from the dinosaurs by either picking them up with your winch or defending them while they're loaded into a transport. And when you're not performing rescue operations, you're blasting away at rendered sprite dinosaurs of incredible size.

From a graphical standpoint, the Neo Geo hardware still amazes me. All dinosaurs are rendered sprites with incredible animation, and it's amazing that there's barely a breath of slowdown, even when the screen is filled with your explosive artillery and a score of aerial dinosaur attackers. My only gripe is that there's so much going on that you can easily lose track of where your ship is. Still, the world of 2D shooters is barren, so if you're a 2D shooting fanatic who's been starving for something—anything—then SNK still loves you. *Prehistoric Isle 2* should be hitting arcades in October, so check it out before a certain cap-wearin' angry dwarf hogs the machine. **—Dangohead**



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Earthworm Jim

If there was one promising thing that was going to come out of the formation of Shiny, it was going to be some absolutely brilliant platform games. And that promise was fulfilled in spades upon their first outing with *Earthworm Jim*. The super-heroic annelid had been bouncing around in Doug TenNapel's head for the better part of 10 years, and with the formation of Shiny he finally got his chance to take center stage... and what a stage it is!

Instead of crafting his character around a relatively cute and cuddly critter like just about every other developer of the day trying to make lightning strike twice (sometimes I wonder if all the fun we had with Sonic was really worth the glut of sub-par drivel that attempted to copy the king... but only for a moment!). Games like *Rocky Rodent, High Seas Havoc, Socket*, etc. proved to be mere diversions when compared to the big two: the aforementioned blue hedgehog and of course, Mario. These two ruled the platform gaming roost in about a thousand different forms (cart games; pinball games; typing games; etc.), and it was going to be near-impossible for anybody else to break into that elite fraternity (in fact, Crash is probably the only other to make as big a splash). However, one other had all the goods: a great design; phenomenal engine; amazingly original gameplay; and above all else, an amazingly magnetic personality.

Now I'm not talking about Mario's goody-goody persona, or Sonic's sometimes suffocating portrayal as the "dude with the 'tude," but an amazingly well-developed persona. His name was Jim... Earthworm Jim. And platform gaming for the hard-core would never again be the same (as for everybody else... <mmphh>).

Shooting, swinging, bungee-jumping, submarine-piloting, rocket-riding, etc., etc., Jim did it all. He didn't merely run really fast or bounce on his enemies' heads, he did it all with style. Armed with a blaster and his wits, he set out to take on the evil forces of PsyCrow, kidnapper of the beautiful Princess What's-Her-Name. Sadly, only one thing stood in Jim's path to world domination: Mario and Sonic.

Sadly, while Jim is fondly and feverishly remembered as one of the greatest platform games of all time by *GameFan*'s readers, the same cannot be said for the general public. Unfortunately, Jim had to go head-to-head with the original *Donkey Kong Country* and all of its ACM 'glory' on the one hand, and Lock-On antics on the other. With nowhere to go, he didn't sell nearly in the numbers he should have. Though his initial outing did warrant a sequel, it was sadly nowhere near the experience that the first one provided, and ironically enough, while the video game didn't do all that great, *EWJ* turned into a minor marketing phenom, garnering a cartoon show and an action figure line—not bad considering he's all but been forgotten by the teeming masses (of course, there's always *EWJ 3D*, <sigh>).

So while you're perusing those bargain bins for some of that old time magic, keep an eye out for a new, shrink-wrapped copy of the original *EWJ* (Kay-Bee has been good to me). If you're *really* lucky you may even find the ultra-rare *EWJ* for Sega CD—the best version of that cult classic ever produced. **ECM**

Graveyard

'Tis a sad day indeed when the developer of some of the greatest games ever made bows out of the big dance. Doug TenNapel, creator of *Earthworm Jim* and Klaymen of *SkullMonkeys* 'fame' (well, he should've been famous...) has hung up his hat. Along the way he helped jumpstart Shiny and worked miracles over at Virgin with the likes of Nick Jones, Nick Bruty, and a whole crew of incredibly talented people that have gone on to work miracles elsewhere in the gaming universe. And since he's moving on, we thought it would be a nice time to take a brief look back at two of his greatest contributions to gaming: his finest hour at Shiny with *Earthworm Jim* and at The Neverhood with *SkullMonkeys*. And I would just like to take a very brief moment and thank Doug for all the hours of enjoyment Team GameFan and all the faithful have had with whatever he managed to grant us in his all-too-brief time in the biz. We'll miss ya, Doug!








It was never meant to be for *SkullMonkeys*. When I first entered the hallowed halls of *GameFan*-dom, I was shocked and dismayed to notice a lone platformer generally getting neglected and left to rot and ruin in a murky corner of the office. After blowing the dust off and inserting the newly *shiny* gold disc into my PS, I didn't know what to expect. What I got was one of the top three PlayStation games of all time.

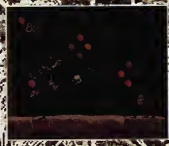
SkullMonkeys starring Klaymen (who earlier appeared in *Neverhood* and also makes an appearance in *BoomBots*), was a game to reside with the greats among the heavenly hosts of platforming gods. Featuring stunning, 2D gameplay, bolted onto a phenomenally animated claymation-style engine, *Skull Monkeys* was certainly unique and altogether well beyond nearly every PS game ever released. Unfortunately for The Neverhood, nobody else felt the same way.

Instead of throwing a massive marketing push behind it, *SM* was left to fend for itself in a world that saw 2D as 'old' and 3D as the only way to go. Most gamers never knew what they missed, and if it had been released alongside games such as the original *Sonic the Hedehog* and *Super Mario World* may even have been their better. Alas, it was too late. The fickle public turned a blind eye to what many gamers (way after the fact) have told me is also one of their favorite gaming experiences.



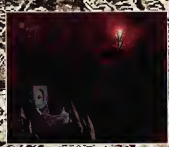
I could easily go off on a six page rant about the state of gaming today; how graphics have usurped gameplay as the prime motivation for purchase, but I won't... Instead I'll once again (and for the final time) beg you to go out to your local gaming shop and pick up this remarkable title and give it a spin. It won't help us get any new 2D platformers (that time is long since past), but maybe, just maybe some of you will realize exactly what the world lost with the disappearance of The Neverhood. **ECM**





SkullMonkeys









AnimeFan

Anime, Manga, J-pop, Asian Live Action, Otaku Culture

A Note from Shidoshi...

Just as I'm about to send this off this issue of AnimeFan to GF HQ to go to press, rumblings have come out that Disney is currently in negotiations with Studio Ghibli to secure the right to release Miyazaki's masterpieces on DVD in the US. Supposedly, with the management changes that have gone on recently at Buena Vista, the new higher ups believe in the digital format far more, and would like to get us things like ***Kiki*** and ***Princess Mononoke*** on DVD. Don't expect this soon, but it just may happen folks. And, when it does, I'll be forced to get on my knees and apologize for all of the nasty things I've said about Disney. So, with that, I hope that you all have an exciting and safe holiday season, no matter which holiday it is that you observe. Let's just hope that Kami-sama answers my prayers and brings me my very own Belldandy for X-mas. Until next issue! ^_^

Goods Showcase

Pokemon

Pokemon... Man, has this thing gone nuts in the US or what? Just the other day I was at a local bookstore, and there was a huge ***Pokemon*** Trading Card tournament going on there. Being the cool rebel that I am, I yelled "Pokemon sucks! Digimon rules!", only to find myself instantly being pummeled by a countless horde of young children, bashing me with their stuffed Pikachus and yelling "Death to the heretic! Viva la revolucion! Attica!" Anyhow, for the millions... and MILLIONS... of ***Pokemon*** fans out there, Viz has your fix. In addition to a number of exciting new goods that should be on stores shelves as we speak, they've got loads more coming. So, allow me to give you a glimpse of both.



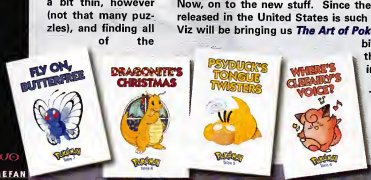


(above) A sample from the "Let's Find Pokemon" book. (right) Pokemon Origami

Current Goods

One of the best parts about being an anime editor—well, besides actually getting paid to sit around and watch cartoons all day long ("What do you mean? I AM working!")—is getting lots of free goodies from companies. So, thanks to Viz, I can actually give you my opinion on some of the current ***Pokemon*** merchandise from first hand experience. Let's start with ***Let's Find Pokemon***. Going along the same lines as the ***Where's Waldo*** books, we are given a two-page illustration showing a scene from the Pokemon world, and told to find certain Pokemon in the picture. Some of the puzzles have side objectives as well, and at the end of the book are a list of more challenging goals to achieve. The book IS a bit thin, however (not that many puzzles), and finding all of the Pokemon is pretty easy. I know, I'm an older person, so of course it's easier. But as opposed to the ***Waldo*** books (where a lot of people looked like Waldo), the Pokemon you are looking for stand out a bit too easily. Next is ***Pokemon Origami***, an enjoyable activity book where you can test your hand at the art of paper folding by creating a variety of well known Pokemon. I get a kick out of these types of things, and the inclusion of variants on each Pokemon was a nice touch. Finally is my favorite of the bunch, the ***Pocket-Sized Pokemon Adventure*** books. These are those types of children's books that are printed on hard stock, and each follows a different Pokemon in a small story. Each book is illustrated in its own style, which adds to the charm and makes each special. These books are perfect gifts for the younger ***Pokemon*** fans (or future fans) out there, or for any ***Pokemon*** fan who can appreciate such things.





New Stuff

Now, on to the new stuff. Since the first ***Pokemon*** movie to be released in the United States is such a big deal, we'll start there. Viz will be bringing us ***The Art of Pokemon: The First Movie***, your biggest and best guide to the theatrical event. Art and images from the movie

(left) Cover images from the Pokemon: The Movie art book, as well as four of the new Pocket-Sized Pokemon Adventures

Goods Showcase



cont. from previous page...

recount the quest in storybook format, not only following along with ***Pokemon the Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back***, but its animated short companion ***Pikachu's Vacation*** as well. Relive the events, the characters, the action and excitement from the movie, not only through the illustrations, but the included additional information and descriptions as well. Next up is ***Pokemon Standees***, where you can make your own little ***Pokemon*** figures by punching them out of the pages and attaching them to a little base. The figures are sturdy and require no scissors, so kids of all ages can build and enjoy their own ***Pokemon*** standees. Finally, five new books will be added to the line of ***Pocket-Sized Pokemon Adventure*** books: ***Where's Clefairy's Voice, Fly On, Butterfree, Psyduck's Tongue Twisters, Dragonite's Christmas***, and ***I'm Not Pikachu***. To be honest, there's even more where these came from, as Viz has no intention of stopping anytime soon. So, consider this just a small glimpse of what you can look forward to in the coming days. **- *shidoshi***

(left) Pokemon Standees book

Guide to Ratings Codes

We'll use this example:

Sub | Dub
VHS | LD | DVD

Black: The title is available in that format / language. So, for our example, the title is out in both Sub and Dub on VHS.

Underlined: The version being reviewed. So, we're reviewing the VHS Sub version.

Greyed: Not available. So, our title isn't out on LD.

Blue: Coming soon / planned. Our example title is planned for release on DVD.

Send comments, letters, artwork to:

AnimeFan
6301 DeSoto Avenue
Unit #E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Or :
shidoshi@gamefan.com

Manga Scene

Panku Ponk!

Comedy • Ironcat • 12+
32 pages • US/Jpn Format • Monthly

B

My local comic shop is pretty good at keeping up with the US manga scene, and anytime I see something new and different I try to pick it up. Well, such was the case with a little title called ***Panku Ponk!***, a strange looking comic from Ironcat L.L.C.. So what did I come to find from my purchase? ***PPI*** is one of those "wacky and somewhat gross humor wrapped in a cute and innocent looking package" type anime/manga titles that Japan is famous for. Bonnie orders herself a pet bunny rabbit, with dreams of an adorable little pet to cuddle and care for. Instead, she finds herself the new owner of a fat, unattractive, rather obnoxious rabbit named Panku Ponk. While this manga may look childish and for kids, there's some really out-there humor going on at times, and the characters and jokes are endearing no matter how old you are. In an interesting point, the comic is half in English, and half in Japanese. The Japanese portion is printed in its original "un-flipped" format, and the English portion is printed flipped, so depending on how you open the comic you can read the exact same story in either language. A very interesting idea, though some may complain that they get only half the comic for normal comic price. There is some REALLY wacky Japanese humor manga out there, most of which sadly never reaches our shores. Thus, if you're looking for something different, I would definitely recommend that you give ***Panku Ponk!*** a chance. **- *shidoshi***



© Tachiri Haruko



Special Feature

Hey, wait a minute.. what is Charlie Brown doing in AnimeFan!? He isn't anime! Well, no, but he IS animated. The reason that I put good old Charlie Brown in this month's issue is because it's that time again—that wonderful collection of months known as September through December. By far Shidoshi's favorite time of the year, this time of the year would NOT be this time of the year without Charlie Brown and the rest of the ***Peanuts*** gang. The ***Peanuts*** Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas shows are yearly traditions, and without them, the holidays just would NOT be the same. So, in between watching anime, be sure to take the time to enjoy these true classics of animation—and no, I'm not just saying this because me and ol' Chuck have so many personality similarities that it's scary. And don't forget—toast, popcorn, and jelly beans make an excellent Thanksgiving day meal, and show just how great a cook you really are.
- *shidoshi*



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Anime Drive-In

Variable Geo

Action • OAV • Viz • 17+
90 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B

If you're familiar at all with the import gaming scene, you'll know that there are quite a few all-girl fighting games. While most of these are experiences in utter mediocrity, two of them have always stood out—***Advanced VG*** and ***Asuka 120%***. Thanks to ADV, we US fans can now experience the animated side of one of them, ***Variable Geo*** (aka ***Advanced VG***). The Variable Geo tournament is a contest for various waitresses to save face for their sponsor restaurants (don't ask). Yuka is one of those girls, and she fights in the hopes of finding out more about herself from her opponents. When her best friend is pulled into the tournament against her will, Yuka must decide what is more important: winning the fight, or saving her friend. For some strange reason, it seems like the less serious the fighting game, the better the anime created for it is. As I've said before, I think ***Fatal Fury: the Movie*** is one of the best fighting-game-to-anime conversions, yet ***FF*** is my least favorite NeoGeo fighter. This tradition seems to continue on here, as ***Variable Geo*** is a surprisingly good show. Sadly, it's not strongest in the areas where it needs to be—the fights themselves. They're way too short, and there isn't enough hand-to-hand, fast and furious combat for my taste. Yet, I had no real complaints about the rest of the show. The characters designs are gorgeous, and are translated amazingly well into the world of animation. A number of times I was impressed with ***VG***'s visual quality, and I'm sure this would have a great showing if it were released on DVD. As well, I actually noticed a number of the musical pieces—when music stands out to me like that, it really means a lot in my eyes. ***Variable Geo*** fared FAR better than I was expecting, and it really earned a lot of respect from me. It definitely could be better, but without question it could have been far worse. Watching it did make me a bit sad, though, because now I REALLY want to see an ***Asuka 120%*** anime! - ***shidoshi***









Don't Leave Me Alone Daisy: Vol 3

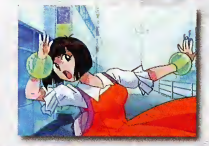
Comedy • TV (2 Eps) • Anime Village • 14+
48 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

NA

In all of the time that I've been reviewing anime, I have NEVER had a tougher review to write than this one. Why, you ask? Well, let me explain. ***Don't Leave Me Alone Daisy*** is the story of one Reijiro Techno, a nerdy shut-in who has no interest in the real world. That is, until one day when he spots a young girl retrieving her hat from his yard. Suddenly, he finds his heart beating and his blood racing, and he becomes obsessed with this young girl that he dubs "Daisy-chan." The only problem is that Daisy-chan—real name Hitomi Matsuzawa—has no interest in her fan's professions of love. So, in order to get her, Techno sets about to steal her heart—literally. Techno stops at nothing to make Daisy-chan his girl, from getting his teacher to sign a document saying that he owns her, to outfitting her body with devices that allows him to control Daisy-chan's every move.







And that, exactly, is my problem with the show. I like the bad guys, I like the anti-heros, I'm all for that stuff. However, in the history of anime, I have never, EVER hated a character more than I hated Techno. He is the worst person in the world in every sense of the word. The things he puts poor Daisy-chan through are just ridiculous, and what makes it worse is that he never suffers for his actions. That right there is what bothered me the most. If Techno got put in his place at some points, I might be able to stand this show more, but as it is he gets away with everything and Daisy-chan almost never stands up to him like she should. Not only that, but it seems that the creators almost want us to feel sorry for Techno—and that infuriated me even more. I hate the character of Techno SO much that it interferes with my enjoyment of this show, because all I can think about is that I wish he were real so that I could beat him about his body with a baseball bat. That's a real shame, because beyond Techno there's a really funny little anime going on here. The supporting characters are great, from the cute-as-a-button Daisy-chan to the brainless teacher Miss Rarako to the TRUE star of this show, the loveable punk Yamakawa X. The art style in this show is atrocious, sure, but it's both bad yet endearing, in its own way. So, in the end, I honestly can't give this one a grade. On one hand, the show isn't bad at all, and is quite funny. Yet, on the other, that stupid two-dimensional creation known as Techno infuriates me so much that it actually worries me, and because of him I won't ever re-watch this so. My only advice to you is watch it for yourself, if you dare, and see what you think of ***Daisy***. - ***shidoshi***

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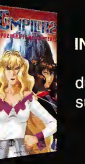
"The best anime show of all time." - Animage

In the not-so-distant future, when human colonies sprawl across the surfaces of nearby planets, attackers appear from Jupiter! Overpowered and outmatched, Earth's hopes rest on the newly developed spaceship Nadesico.

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sub: $29.95

COMPILER 2

"What a fun series! A+"
- Anime News Network



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dub: $19.98
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Discovering that Earth space is still beyond their control, the pan-dimensional masters of the matrix are not amused. Just as beautiful and twice as deadly, White Compiler sets out to destroy her flawed prototype.

2 BUBBLEGUM CRISIS TOKYO 2040



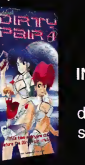
"A finely crafted sci-fi masterpiece! Extraordinary!" - Dave Halverson

Face to face with the automated insanity of a mad boomer, the newest of the Knight Sabers learns the limit of her hard suit in a traumatic exchange of mechanical fury.

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ORIGINAL DIRTY PAIR VOL.4

"Classic science fiction slapstick." - scifi.com



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dub: $19.98
sub: $29.95

Upon learning that the leader of a new drug ring was once the top candidate at the 3WA training facility, the infallible Central Computer naturally commissions Kei and Yuri to bring her in.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



"Beautiful animation." - Fright X

Everyone's favorite hyper hedgehog returns in an animated spectacular that will blow its American counterparts right off the tube. Sonic races deep into the heart of Robotropolis to save the planet and comes face to face with an evil robot version of himself.

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dub: $19.98
DVD: $29.98

THOSE WHO HUNT ELVES Ch.4



"Funny! Damn funny." - Anime Review Page

Those Who Hunt Elves must strip the disembodied spirit of an elf, so Celcia arranges for the group to travel into the spirit world, but that means that they have to leave their bodies behind.

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Anime Drive-In

Macross Plus: Vol 2

Drama • OAV (2 eps.) • Manga Ent. • 15+
90 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Anime	DVD
A-	A-

Anime

Macross was, even from the beginning, a series that tried to meld both the aspects of a fast-paced, high action "giant robot" show with an emotional drama about the people who must pilot those very robots. And yet, when ***Macross Plus*** came along, the balance that had existed before was put aside for a new telling of the ***Macross*** saga that focused far more of its strength on the characters and the struggles they went through in their lives. Gigantic space battles gave way to the story of two rivals, and while some weren't happy with this, just as many loved the chance and still consider it the best ***Macross*** ever. I originally watched the ***Macross Plus*** "movie" (the OVA series cut up into a much smaller single show), but going back through it when watching the DVD version I was quite shocked. I love this show, far more than I did when I first watched it: the development of the main characters, and the conflict between them, is superb. I'm not sure if I just didn't give it a chance before, or if the movie version did such a disservice to the OVA. Of course, ***MP***'s visuals are a treat as well, and the music .. if there is ever ANY anime soundtrack you should pick up, it's this one.

DVD

It's taken Manga quite a while to get back into the DVD fold, but come back they have. Whereas their last effort, ***Ninja Scroll***, left me rather unimpressed, ***Macross Plus*** is a stellar effort in every word. The picture quality... man. No matter how many DVDs I watch, I still get impressed any time I watch a new one that is done right, and a number of times during ***MP*** I was shaking my head in amazement. The picture quality isn't perfect—the contrast is a wee dark for me, so that some really dark scenes are a bit too dark—but it's so good that I'm not about to complain. The English 5.1 mix sounded great for the time that I listened to it, I just wish that there was a Japanese 5.1 track to go with it. This is a stellar DVD anime title, a wise purchase choice for any DVD fans, and an absolute must for ***Macross Plus*** fans. - ***shidoshi***















Sailor Victory

Act/Comedy • OAV (2 Eps.) • Anime Works • 16+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B+

Mikado City has a problem—criminals in giant robots periodically terrorize the city, and the inept police force don't have what it takes to stop them (but then, what city hasn't had this problem?). Enter "Sailor Victory," a group of five girls who vow to keep their hometown safe. Using three giant robots, the girls of Sailor Victory stop at nothing to make sure that truth and love always prevails over evil! Anime Works seems to really know how to pick their anime titles lately, especially when it comes to comedies. ***Elf Princess*** was classic, and ***Sailor Victory*** is amazingly strong in its own right. The comedy aspects are great (and, more importantly, funny), yet the series isn't just a joke and nothing more. The action scenes are cool, and the mecha designs (giant robots that look like ninjas) work damn well. If you're going to have a story about cute female heroines which is geared towards the male anime fan, you've got to have characters that are interesting and pleasing to the eyes. ***SV***'s cast is surprisingly strong, not only in looks but personality. Even with only two short episodes, I found myself liking the cast, and how they played off of one another. My only problem with the cast was that Mimi's clone, Annie, took a bit too much of the spotlight off of Mimi, but it wasn't so much that I saw this as a major downfall. The character designs are good, and have a rather strange origin. I SWORE that I had seen these girls before—in Japanese sim games, to be exact—and it seems that there are indeed those same girls. How exactly does that work? I've no idea, but they are good designs, and it's kind of an interesting idea, so I don't really care. Thankfully, the in-show art and animation, while showing the original character designs in their full glory, do their best to do them justice. So, I came out of ***Sailor Victory*** not only with a smile on my face from the humor, but also wanting to see more, simply because this is a great series that not only works, well but makes it look easy to do so (something I wish more anime could do). - ***shidoshi***



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Anime Drive-In







Outlaw Star: Vol 4

Adventure • TV (2 Eps) • Anime Village • 15+
50 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B

The pieces have come together. Lives have been lost, battles fought, but now the "Outlaw Star"—a super-powerful spacecraft co-developed by the government and a gang of pirates—is in the hands of Gene Starwind and his crew. Back on Gene and Jim's home planet, they are trying to get a bit of rest while the Outlaw Star is equipped with much-needed weapons. Unfortunately, trouble rears its ugly head as the Kei Pirates plan an all-out assault on the crew. The beautiful assassin Suzuka makes her return, and not only does she aid Melfina, but it seems that she has decided to join Gene in his battle against the Kei. With time running out, and Gene near death from poison, the crew of the Outlaw Star make a desperate attempt to escape the planet alive. I wasn't really too enthralled by the series as I started into it. "Great, another space adventure. Sort of like ***Cowboy BeBop***, just not as good" is pretty much what I was thinking. It didn't take long before I totally dug ***Outlaw Star***, though, as it has a coolness and personality of its own which got me hooked. Part of the reason I think it's so good is that it has a really strong cast—none of the characters feel awkward or unneeded (and you've just got to love a space crew with a traditional Japanese assassin. I also the way in which the storyline is crafted. There's a continual plot going on, yet so far it seems that ***OS*** has left itself open for a wide array of possible future events without getting stuck in a rut like make a series do. There is an odd amount of inconsistency in the show, though. The animation goes from amazing good for a TV show to typical so-so TV quality (prompting my friend to ask "where did all of this animation come from" more than once), and the art and character styles changed an unsettling amount of times during the episodes that I watched. Even so, that really didn't bother me too much, to be honest. No, the only thing that made me question the show is the big space combat scene in the eighth episode. It goes into the whole "spaceships with arms" deal, and watching spacecraft attack each other with swords, I couldn't help but think how silly of an idea that is. Odd space battle aside, I'm really digging ***Outlaw Star***. It doesn't ooze the funk and personality that something like ***Cowboy BeBop*** does, but it stands on its own enough to make me eager to see the rest of the series. **- *shidoshi***

Magic Knight Rayearth: Sunrise

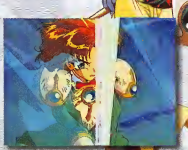
Adventure • TV (4 Eps) • Anime Works • 13+
100 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

B-

Still on the trail of the legendary Escudo, the three Magic Knights—Hikaru, Fuu, and Umi—reach their destination, only to be forced to face their inner demons. Victorious, the girls take the Escudo back to the weapons master Presea, who begins to craft it into powerful swords for our heroes. Unfortunately, a new enemy, Ascot, arrives on the scene, and uses his powerful pets to try to destroy the Magic Knights. Can the three girls stop Ascot for long enough to allow Presea to finish their weapons, or will Ascot prove to be far too powerful? My opinion of ***Rayearth*** reminded me a lot of my opinion of ***Fushigi Yugi***. At first, I didn't think much of it. In fact, ***Rayearth*** bored me to tears the first time I watched it. Even though I was already a fan of the manga, I shut off the first episode halfway through after nearly falling asleep. And yet, giving it a chance, the more I watched, and the more I progressed, the more I began to like it. I give a lot of credit to ***Rayearth*** for being a bit atypical for such a typical show: for being so cutesy and silly, ***Rayearth*** also has a lot of serious undertones and CLAMP showed no fear in killing characters off. I think that once you get the feeling that any member of the cast can be gone at any moment, and aren't guaranteed to be there in the end, it gives more credit to the attempt by the show to build tension and suspense. The best part is that, at least to me, the three heroines slowly begin to build in personality and aren't just another group of cutesy magical girls who must battle evil. There's still a lot of room for them to grow, don't get me wrong, but they do have some much-needed life to them. I would also like to point out, before I wrap this up, that in this day of "as few TV episodes per tape as possible," Anime Works giving four episodes on each volume is something to be commended. So, when it's all said and done, ***Magic Knight Rayearth*** may be a bit hard to get into at first, but give it a bit of time, as the payoff is another enjoyable little series for your anime library.
- *shidoshi*









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AF News Service

King of Anime '99 Returns Next Month

I had originally planned to have the next installment of the King of Anime '99 this issue, but due to a delay with the release of ***Tenchi Forever!***, it unfortunately had to be delayed. So, watch next issue for the next combatant in KoA'99, and see how the third (and possibly last) ***Tenchi*** movie stacks up to its competition.

the King of Anime
FOUR GO IN. ONLY ONE COMES O

Ah! My Goddess! Movie

While details are STILL very lacking, it seems to finally be official—a new ***Oh My Goddess!*** (aka ***Ah! My Goddess!*** aka ***Ah! Megami-sama***) anime is coming. Better yet, not only is a new anime coming, but it is in fact an ***OMG!*** movie! Of course, as ***OMG!*** is one of Shidoshi's all-time most favorite anime titles ever, this news is some of the best he's ever heard. The original (yet far too few) ***OMG!*** OAVs were absolutely wonderful, with gorgeous animation and art, and beautiful music to complement the show... not to mention Inoue Kikuko, who is the only TRUE voice of Belldandy. So, if the movie is, at the very least, as good as the OAV was, this will be a stellar movie. Originally running as a manga title in the Japanese publication Afternoon Monthly, ***Ah! Megami-sama*** was translated into an OAV which was released in 1992 and 1993. The OAV became quite popular among both Japanese and US anime fans, and since then many have been begging for more. Six years later, the plans to produce another chapter of the story—this time, a theatrical movie—finally came into reality. Here is what is known so far: The movie will be released in Japan sometime in the Spring of 2000 (the exact date is not yet known). The head director for the film will be Goda Hiroaki, with the secondary director and character designer being Matsubara Hidenori. The story will be handled by Yokote Michiko, with scenario work by Tomizawa Yoshihiko.



Shidoshi's Fun Corner

Welcome to the second installment of Shidoshi's Fun Corner! This month's game is a bit different. It's "Shidoshi's Synonym Scramble"! I've taken the name of ten anime titles below, and changed each word in the title to a synonym. For example, if I were to say "consume food mortal", the anime would be ***Eat Man***. For a few of the titles below, I had to change the name slightly, because a word just couldn't be changed and would give the answer away. For those, I changed the title into another form that fans would also know it by (like changing "Oh My Goddess!" to "Ah! My Goddess!"). Again, no prize, no badge of honor, just another chance to prove how HARDCORE of an anime fan you are. I'll print the answers in the next issue just in case you get too stumped to figure any of them out.

- pleasing warrior boatman unearthly globe
- enchantress's bringing merchandise ministration
- globule resin emergency
- you are on the bottom of seizure
- mythical beast sphere zed
- inky tool for lifting
- necropolis of the combustion creepy crawler
- negative requirement for paradise and planet
- pouch beast
- clenched hand of the polar celestial body

Pokemon is Evil!

There are four certainties in life: death, taxes, *Fatal Fury*, and the fact that where ever there is money, there will be lawyers trying to find any way possible to get some of it. With the success of ***Pokemon***, lawyers (and the dregs of humanity using them to try to get rich quick) are all over Nintendo's baby like Shidoshi on a Sanrio store having a 75% off sale. A few days before my writing this, a San Diego law firm brought up a suit against Nintendo of America, Wizards of the Coast, and 4Kids Entertainment charging that ***Pokemon*** (or, more specifically, the ***Pokemon*** Trading Card Game) leads innocent kids to the seedy world of illegal gambling. Don't ask, I don't have room to explain their flimsy argument. Anyhow, the law firm had to pulled out of the suit days after initiating it as it seems they didn't do their homework: the law firm represents the New York-based 4Kids company, so naming them in the suit was a no-no. However, three other law firms in New Jersey, Los Angeles, and San Diego will still be pursuing the suit. This ploy (of going after trading and sports cards) has been tried a number of times before, and none have been successful (yeah common sense). Joining in on the taste of blood are two Long Island youths who claim that in their attempt to collect the rarer ***Pokemon*** cards, they became addicted, purchased cards non-stop, and are now penniless. I'd give you my thoughts on this one, but I'd probably have a lawsuit slapped on me as well. Let's just say that, hypothetically, had I said something about it, I might have used phrases such as "lack of" and "basic common sense."



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Hocus Pocus

codes, hints & strategies

Welcome to the pages of cheats, codes, and hints galore!!! Upon these leaves you will find all the assistance you'll need for the hottest games today. Not satisfied? Need help on another game? No problem! If you need codes or hints on any game, mail GameFan, or e-mail **hocus-pocus@gamefan.com.** *Now, travel with thy controller in hand, to a place where cheaters prosper...*

Code of the Month!

Okay... we here at GameFan are suckers for a good-looking face. So when we learned of* NFL Gameday 2000*'s Slideshow code that enabled you to see a nice slideshow of cheerleaders after the game, well, we just had to put it up as Code of the Month.



NFL GameDay 2000

To access this code, simply go to the Easter Eggs section and input SLIDESHOW. Now, after you play the game, you'll be treated to a nice long slideshow of some beautiful babes.

Ready 2 Rumble *Multiple Codes*







All Boxers
Getting tired of being beat up black and blue? Well, to get all the boxers in the game instantly, select "Championship Mode" from the main menu, and choose New Game. When it prompts you to enter a name, enter "POD 5!". Now confirm this as the new name, and back out to Arcade Mode. All the boxers will be selectable, including Damien Black.

Alternate Costumes
To select the character's outfits, press X + Y.

Alternate Cornerman
To select an alternate cornerman yelling and screaming at you, at the character selection screen, hold X, and press up, down, right, or left.

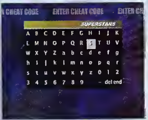
Leprechaun Cornerman
To have ECM be your cornerman... um, I mean, Leprechaun as your cornerman, at the character selection screen, hold X and press L Shift and R Shift.

Different Arenas
To fight in different boxing rings, you have to be playing in a two player mode game. Then, at the character selection screen, hold L Shift to select the two-tier ring, hold R Shift to select the championship ring, hold R and L Shift for a gym boxing ring, and hold R Shift, L Shift, and X for the outdoor ring while selecting your boxer.





NFL 2K *Cheat Codes*



Enter the following codes at the Codes section in the Options Menu. Note that all codes are entered in all capital letters.

SUPERSTARS — enables the SEGA/VC team

SCRAWL — does a funky thing to the text

SQUEEKY — makes the voice of the commentators squeaky

TURBO — enables a TURBO game speed setting

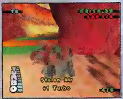
DEDMAN — enables a SLOW-MO game speed setting



LARD — makes all the players very fat

Hot Wheels Turbo Racing *Multiple Codes*





To enable all of these hot codes, enter the following commands for the appropriate code at the Main Menu screen. You should hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly:

Wireframe Mode
C-Up, Z, C-Down, C-Left, C-Up, Z, C-Down, C-Left

Infinite Turbos
C-Right, Z, C-Up, C-Down, R, C-Left, Z, C-Right

Night Racing
C-Up, C-Up, C-Down, C-Down, C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right

Mirrored Tracks
Z, R, Z, Z, R, Z, Z, Z

Stealth Mode
C-Left, Z, Z, C-Up, C-Left, R, C-Down, C-Up

Unlock TowJam Car
C-Up, C-Down, Z, R, C-Left, C-Right, C-Up, C-Down





NFL GameDay 2000 Cheat Codes











Enter the options screen and choose the Easter Eggs selection. Then, enter one of the following codes to activate the corresponding cheat function:

Receivers catch better
GLOVES

Super speed bursts
JUICE

Super stiff arm
PISTON

Longer and higher punts
HANGTIME

Longer field goals
STEEL LEG

Harder tackles
BIG HITS

Players do not fatigue
STAMINA

All players have equal abilities
EVEN TEAMS

No penalties for home team
HOME COOKING

Better running back
BETTIS

Running back is juiced
DAVIS

Hidden difficulty level
GD CHALLENGE

Very slow CPU players
SLOW CPU

Large players
GOLIATH

Tall and thin players
PENCILS

Tiny players
FLEA CIRCUS

Cycle through cheerleaders after game
SLIDESHOW









WCW Mayhem Pay-Per-View Codes















All of these codes are entered at the Pay-Per-View Password screen to enable the following cheats:

CBCKRMS — All backrooms (allows you to fight in the bathrooms, garden area, etc.)

PLYHDNGYS — All wrestlers

DPLGNGRS — Dopplleganger mode allows you to play as same

MKSPRCWS — Bionic wrestlers mode allows you to have max attributes for edited wrestlers.

GameShark Codes

GAMESHARK
INTERACT

Biohazard 3: Last Escape PlayStation (Import)

Infinite HP All
8003E6AA 0060

Infinite HP
800CC338 00C8

Status Fine
300CC33F 0004

Infinite Ammo
D006D974 FFFF
8006D974 0000
D006D994 FFFF
8006D994 0000

All Files
800D17D4 FFFF
800D17D6 FFFF

All Maps
300D17CF 00FE
300D17D3 00FE

G-Police: Weapon of Destruction PlayStation

Infinite Shields
801209F6 2400
801216AA 2400

Infinite Ammo
80121EBE 2400
8012248E 2400

Hot Wheels Turbo Racing PlayStation

Infinite Turbos
30129840 0009

Add Turbos
8003FD90 0001

Max Tournament Points
801397C8 00FF

Max Points
801295F0 FFFF
801295F2 000F

Unlock All Cars
801397B8 FFFF
801397BA FFFF
801397BC FFFF

Stealth Mode
801298F0 FFFF

South Park PlayStation

Open Cheat Menu
8008EE40 0000

Activate Multiplayer Characters
80098264 FFFF
80098266 FFFF

Have All Weapons & Infinite Ammo
800989C8 0107
80098C10 001A
80098C14 000A

Invincible
8008F994 0001

Jet Moto 3 PlayStation

Unlock All Secret Riders & Trophies
80010F66 FFFF

Unlock All Medals & Pins
80010F64 FFFF

Track Codes
Urban Subway
8008F50C 0002

Catacombs
8008F56C 0002

SkyPark
8008F59C 0002

Shipwreck Cove
8008F5CC 0003

Machu Picchu
8008F5FC 0002

Sequoia Forest
8008F62C 0002

Planet X
8008F65C 0002

Ytic Tsol
8008F68C 0002

Krapyks
8008F6EC 0002

Final Fantasy VIII PlayStation

Squall/Laguna
Max HP
8007780A 270F

Max Experience
8007780C E0FF
8007780E 05F5

Max Str
30077812 00FF

Max Vit
30077813 00FF

Max Mag
30077814 00FF

Max Spr
30077815 00FF

Max Spd
30077816 00FF

Max Luck
30077817 00FF

Rinoa
Max HP
80077A6A 270F

Max Experience
80077A6C E0FF
80077A6E 05F4

Max Str
30077A72 00FF

Max Vit
30077A73 00FF

Max Mag
30077A74 00FF

Max Spr
30077A75 00FF

Max Spd
30077A76 00FF

Max Luck
30077A77 00FF

Quistis
Max HP
800779D2 270F

Max Experience
800779D4 E0FF
800779D6 05F5

Max Str
300779DA 00FF

Max Vit
300779DB 00FF

Max Mag
300779DC 00FF

Max Spr
300779DD 00FF

Max Spd
300779DE 00FF

Max Luck
300779DF 00FF

Zell
Max HP
800778A2 270F

Max Experience
800778A4 E0FF
800778A6 05F4

Max Str
300778AA 00FF

Max Vit
300778AB 00FF

Max Mag
300778AC 00FF

Max Spr
300778AD 00FF

Max Spd
300778AE 00FF

Max Luck
300778AF 00FF

Irvine
Max HP
8007793A 270F

Max Experience
8007793C E0FF
8007793E 05F4

Max Str
30077942 00FF

Max Vit
30077943 00FF

Max Mag
30077944 00FF

Max Spr
30077945 00FF

Max Spd
30077946 00FF

Max Luck
30077947 00FF

Selphie
Max HP
80077B02 270F

Max Experience
80077B04 E0FF
80077B06 05F4

Max Str
30077B0A 00FF

Max Vit
30077B0B 00FF

Max Mag
30077B0C 00FF

Max Spr
30077B0D 00FF

Max Spd
30077B0E 00FF

Max Luck
30077B0F 00FF

Seifer
Max HP
80077B9A 270F

Max Experience
80077B9C E0FF
80077B9E 05F4

Max Str
30077BA2 00FF

Max Vit
30077BA3 00FF

Max Mag
30077BA4 00FF

Max Spr
30077BA5 00FF

Max Spd
30077BA6 00FF

Max Luck
30077BA7 00FF

Edea
Max HP
80077C32 270F

Max Experience
80077C34 E0FF
80077C36 05F4

Max Str
30077C3A 00FF

Max Vit
30077C3B 00FF

Max Mag
30077C3C 00FF

Max Spr
30077C3D 00FF

Max Spd
30077C3E 00FF

Max Luck
30077C3F 00FF

Assault Suit Valken 2 PlayStation

Infinite Hp
800D23F2 03E7

Max Hp
800D23F4 03E7

Infinite Ap
300D23FB 00FF

Max Ap
300D23FC 00FF

Weight
800D23F6 270F

Power
800D23F8 270F

ECM's Head
300D9283 0000

Physic
300D23FE 00FF

Burst
300D23FF 00FF

Perf
300D2400 00FF

Elect
300D2401 00FF

Blaze
300D2402 00FF

Photon
300D2403 00FF

Monster Rancher 2

A Sampling of Editors' Tastes (or lack thereof)

Alright, we'll admit it... the entire editorial staff of GameFan (except Cerberus who is a pet himself), has fallen in love with Monster Rancher 2. It's become one of GameFan's favorite games, and for good reason. The ability to use your own music CDs to make all sorts of monsters allows an unparalleled amount of unique pets to train and use. And since everyone has different tastes in music, we here at GameFan have compiled some of our favorite CD's, and have generated some good startup monsters that anyone can use. Please note that some of the CDs we list to generate monsters from won't be accessible till you play further into the game, and even after finishing the game once, you still might not be able to unlock a number of monsters.

Legend:

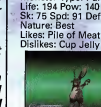
Lif — determines how much health you have
Pow — how much damage you do during battles
Int — determines how quickly you monster can learn skills. Also, determines magical abilit.
Ski — a measure of striking accuracy
Spd — determines the general speed and evading ability
Def — the defensive toughness of your monster

Type: Tells you what kind of monster it is. A monster can be a purebreed, or a mixed breed. If it's a mixed breed, it will have a Main form and a Sub form. This information is useful when you start to mix monsters together.

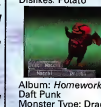
Nature: Determines the attitude and morals of your monster. A good natured monster will train well and will seldom cheat when training, while a bad natured monster will run away and cheat often in training. When a monster cheats in training, he receives less than half the bonuses. It's difficult to change the nature of your monster, but not completely impossible. Changing the nature of your monster depends on how well you treat it over a certain period of time.



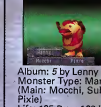
Fury's CDs



Album: *Prolonging the Magic* by Cake
Monster Type: Pure Baku
Life: 194 Pow: 140 Int: 51
Sk: 75 Spd: 91 Def: 169
Nature: Best
Likes: Pile of Meat
Dislikes: Cup Jelly



Album: *Lucifuge* by Danzig III
Monster Type: Rocky Fur (Main: Hare, Sub: Golem)
Life: 125 Pow: 174 Int: 83
Sk: 105 Spd: 131 Def: 127
Nature: Good
Likes: Steamed Bun
Dislikes: Potato

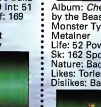


Album: *Homework* by Daft Punk
Monster Type: Draco Mocchi (Main: Mocchi, Sub: Draco)
Life: 139 Pow: 94 Int: 167
Sk: 181 Spd: 107 Def: 157
Nature: Bad
Likes: Play
Dislikes: Cup Jelly

Album: *5* by Lenny Kravitz
Monster Type: Manna (Main: Mocchi, Sub: Pixie)
Life: 125 Pow: 126 Int: 155
Sk: 149 Spd: 148 Def: 128
Nature: Bad
Likes: Rest
Dislikes: Tablet



Album: *The Score* by Fugees
Monster Type: Priarocks (Main: Arrow Head, Sub: Golem)
Life: 139 Pow: 1667 Int: 1
Sk: 43 Spd: 82 Def: 192
Nature: Good
Likes: Rest
Dislikes: Milk



Album: *Check Your Head* by the Beastie Boys
Monster Type: Pure Metalner
Life: 52 Pow: 43 Int: 27
Sk: 162 Spd: 62 Def: 171
Nature: Bad
Likes: Tories
Dislikes: Battle

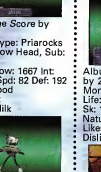


Album: *When Disaster Strikes* by Busta Rhymes
Monster Type: Renocraft (Main: Arrow Head, Sub: Henger)
Life: 131 Pow: 108 Int: 68
Sk: 123 Spd: 92 Def: 143
Nature: Best
Likes: Rest
Dislikes: Cup Jelly

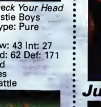


Album: *Wu-Tang Forever Disc 1* by Wu-Tang Clan
Monster Type: Fairy Hopper (Main: Hopper, Sub: Pixie)
Life: 91 Pow: 96 Int: 154
Sk: 164 Spd: 149 Def: 87
Nature: Bad
Likes: Play
Dislikes: Potato

Album: *Wu-Tang Forever Disc 2* by Wu-Tang Clan
Monster Type: Icy-Jell (Main: Jell, Sub: Tiger)
Life: 99 Pow: 118 Int: 166
Sk: 127 Spd: 114 Def: 135
Nature: Best
Likes: Rock Candy
Dislikes: Potato



Album: *All Eyez On Me* by 2-Pac
Monster Type: Pure Mew
Life: 153 Pow: 82 Int: 75
Sk: 138 Spd: 148 Def: 99
Nature: Neutral
Likes: Meat
Dislikes: Milk



Judge's CDs

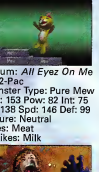


Album: *Voodoo-U* by the Lords of Acid
Monster Type: Pure Henger
Life: 112 Pow: 163 Int: 122
Sk: 164 Spd: 201 Def: 99
Nature: Best
Likes: Battle
Dislikes: Milke



Album: *The Very Best of Neil Diamond Disc 1* by Neil Diamond
Monster Type: Manna (Main: Mocchi, Sub: Pixie)
Life: 111 Pow: 137 Int: 128
Sk: 160 Spd: 145 Def: 134
Nature: Bad
Likes: Play
Dislikes: Meat

Album: *The Very Best of Neil Diamond Disc 2* by Neil Diamond
Monster Type: Tropical Ape (Main: Ape, Sub: Plant)
Life: 143 Pow: 136 Int: 80
Sk: 111 Spd: 113 Def: 164
Nature: Good
Likes: Play
Dislikes: Fish



Album: *Van Halen*
Monster Type: Draco Kato (Main: Kato, Sub: Dragon)
Life: 105 Pow: 126 Int: 160
Sk: 116 Spd: 179 Def: 121
Nature: Worst
Likes: Play
Dislikes: Tablet



Album: *Physical Graffiti Disc 1* by Led Zeppelin
Monster Type: Spot Saurian (Main: Saurian, Sub: Hare)
Life: 144 Pow: 168 Int: 85
Sk: 148 Spd: 152 Def: 109
Nature: Good
Likes: Sour Jelly
Dislikes: Potato

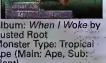


Album: *Physical Graffiti Disc 2* by Led Zeppelin
Monster Type: Hare Hound
Life: 105 Pow: 110 Int: 133
Sk: 159 Spd: 138 Def: 74
Nature: Good
Likes: Rest
Dislikes: Cup Jelly
Album: *Clockwork*



Orange Soundtrack by Various Artists
Monster Type: New Leaf (Main: Mono, Sub: Plant)
Life: 119 Pow: 104 Int: 158
Sk: 118 Spd: 40 Def: 114
Nature: Good
Likes: Whet Stone
Dislikes: Tablet

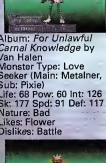
Album: *Apocalypse Now Soundtrack Disc 1* by Various Artists
Monster Type: Jungler (Main: Naga, Sub: Plant)
Life: 188 Pow: 116 Int: 121
Sk: 159 Spd: 105 Def: 75
Nature: Good
Likes: Milk
Dislikes: Fish



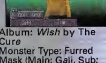
Album: *When I Woke* by Rusted Root
Monster Type: Tropical Ape (Main: Ape, Sub: Plant)
Life: 166 Pow: 123 Int: 93
Sk: 121 Spd: 109 Def: 124
Nature: Good
Likes: Milk
Dislikes: Fish



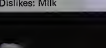
Album: *Spinal Tap Soundtrack* by Spinal Tap
Monster Type: Gordish (Main: Kato, Sub: Gail)
Life: 92 Pow: 66 Int: 179
Sk: 144 Spd: 158 Def: 85
Nature: Best
Likes: Perfume Oil
Dislikes: Cup Jelly



ECM's CDs



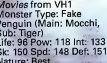
Album: *For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge* by Van Halen
Monster Type: Love Seeker (Main: Metalner, Sub: Pixie)
Life: 68 Pow: 60 Int: 126
Sk: 177 Spd: 91 Def: 117
Nature: Bad
Likes: Flower
Dislikes: Battle



Album: *Wish* by The Cure
Monster Type: Furred Mask (Main: Gail, Sub: Hare)
Life: 107 Pow: 182 Int: 98
Sk: 159 Spd: 128 Def: 92
Nature: Best
Likes: Rest
Dislikes: Milk



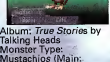
Album: *Bat Out of Hell II: Back Into Hell* by Meat Loaf
Monster Type: Noble Saurian (Main: Saurian, Sub: Gail)
Life: 147 Pow: 163 Int: 106
Sk: 169 Spd: 146 Def: 110
Nature: Best
Likes: Kids Oil
Dislikes: Cup Jelly



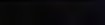
Album: *The Big 80's – Big Movies* from VH1
Monster Type: Fake Penguin (Main: Mocchi, Sub: Tiger)
Life: 96 Pow: 118 Int: 133
Sk: 150 Spd: 148 Def: 151
Nature: Best
Likes: Tablet
Dislikes: Meat



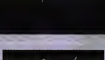
Album: *World Falling Down* by Peter Cetera
Monster Type: Rock Ape (Main: Ape, Sub: Golem)
Life: 139 Pow: 192 Int: 57
Sk: 123 Spd: 90 Def: 157
Nature: Neutral
Likes: Fish
Dislikes: Milk



Album: *One More Story* by Peter Cetera
Monster Type: Tropical Ape (Main: Ape, Sub: Plant)
Life: 161 Pow: 139 Int: 109
Sk: 131 Spd: 96 Def: 140
Nature: Good
Likes: Battle
Dislikes: Fish



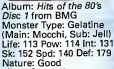
Album: *True Stories* by Talking Heads
Monster Type: Mustachios (Main: Hopper, Sub: Kato)
Life: 79 Pow: 84 Int: 163
Sk: 185 Spd: 131 Def: 48
Nature: Bad
Likes: Cup Jelly
Dislikes: Milk



Album: *More of the Big 80's* from VH1
Monster Type: Jelly Hare (Main: Hare, Sub: Jell)
Life: 91 Pow: 153 Int: 93
Sk: 132 Spd: 139 Def: 104
Nature: Good
Likes: Play
Dislikes: Fish



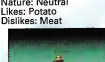
Album: *Very* by the Pet Shop Boys
Monster Type: Mustard Arrow (M: Arrow Head, Sub: Suezo
Life: 116 Pow: 131 Int: 153
Sk: 118 Spd: 74 Def: 141
Nature: Bad
Likes: Battle
Dislikes: Meat



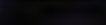
Album: *Hits of the 80's Disc 1* from BMG
Monster Type: Gelatine (Main: Mocchi, Sub: Jell)
Life: 113 Pow: 114 Int: 131
Sk: 152 Spd: 140 Def: 179
Nature: Good
Likes: Cup Jelly
Dislikes: Tablet



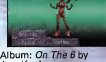
Cerberus' CDs



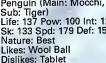
Album: *Bailamos (Enrique Iglesias' Greatest Hits)* by Enrique Iglesias
Monster Type: Jelly Gaboo (Main: Gaboo, Sub: Jell)
Life: 106 Pow: 122 Int: 84
Sk: 73 Spd: 152 Def: 117
Nature: Neutral
Likes: Potato
Dislikes: Meat



Album: *Vegas* by Crystal Method
Monster Type: Pink Kato (Main: Kato, Sub: Mocchi)
Life: 89 Pow: 86 Int: 174
Sk: 150 Spd: 170 Def: 106
Nature: Good
Likes: Olive Oil
Dislikes: Meat



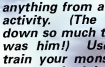
Album: *On The 6* by Jennifer Lopez
Monster Type: Granity (Main: Pixie, Sub: Golem)
Life: 71 Pow: 91 Int: 198
Sk: 162 Spd: 120 Def: 68
Nature: Best
Likes: Shiny Stone
Dislikes: Meat



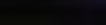
Album: *Achtung Baby* by U2
Monster Type: Fake Penguin (Main: Mocchi, Sub: Tiger)
Life: 137 Pow: 100 Int: 122
Sk: 133 Spd: 179 Def: 156
Nature: Best
Likes: Wool Ball
Dislikes: Tablet



Album: *Relation* by Globe
Monster Type: Pure Mocchi
Life: 129 Pow: 109 Int: 145
Sk: 148 Spd: 133 Def: 155
Nature: Good
Likes: Battle
Dislikes: Tablet

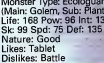


Album: *The Saint Movie Soundtrack* by Various Artists
Monster Type: Frozen Gaboo (Main: Gaboo, Sub: Tiger)
Life: 164 Pow: 121 Int: 96
Sk: 127 Spd: 137 Def: 78
Nature: Best
Likes: Play
Dislikes: Battle





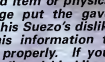
Album: *The Police Live! Disc 1* by The Police
Monster Type: Bowwow (Main: Mew, Sub: Tiger)
Life: 119 Pow: 100 Int: 120
Sk: 143 Spd: 160 Def: 91
Nature: Best
Likes: Tablet
Dislikes: Potato



Album: *The Police Live! Disc 2* by The Police
Monster Type: Pologuardia (Main: Golem, Sub: Plant)
Life: 168 Pow: 96 Int: 131
Sk: 99 Spd: 75 Def: 135
Nature: Good
Likes: Tablet
Dislikes: Battle



Album: *Best of Dance '88* from Zyx Music
Monster Type: Garlant (Main: Henger, Sub: Dragon)
Life: 102 Pow: 153 Int: 142
Sk: 154 Spd: 141 Def: 89
Nature: Bad
Likes: Potato
Dislikes: Cup Jelly



Album: *Dreamland* by Robert Miles
Monster Type: Jelly Saurian (Main: Saurian, Sub: Jell)
Life: 137 Pow: 143 Int: 123
Sk: 144 Spd: 94 Def: 176
Nature: Neutral
Likes: Battle
Dislikes: Potato

Likes and Dislikes

Each monster will have a set of likes and dislikes at the very beginning of their life. Likes and dislikes can be anything from a food item or physical activity. (The Judge put the gavel down so much that his Suezo's dislike was him!) Use this information to train your monster properly. If your monster is doing well and his Like is Meat, you should throw him a piece of meat. However, if your monster is being bad, and his Like is Battle, it might not necessarily be a good idea to send it into battle. Bear in mind that Likes and Dislikes can change over time, so there's still hope the Judge will find a friend in his Suezo.

Soul Calibur Starter Combo Section

As one of the best looking fighting games ever, Soul Calibur has its fair share of awesome looking combos. And since GameFan loves all of our readers, here's a list of combos for each normal character in the game.

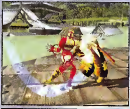
Now, bear in mind that all of these combos are possible in the best situations. But since most of the following combos are air juggles, many of these combos won't work if the opponent uses air control to avoid being air juggled. Still, these combos will give you some insight on how combos work for certain characters, and hopefully will help you create combos of your own.

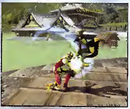
Legend

Up — tap up on the D-pad
Down — tap down on the D-pad
Back — tap back on the D-pad
Forward — tap forward on the D-pad
Diag. — any diagonal motion on the D-pad (i.e. diag. down/forward = tap the D-pad in a diagonal down/forward motion)

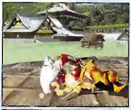
X — horizontal attacks
Y — vertical attacks
B — Kick attacks

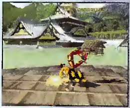
VOLDO


First step is to knock the target up with a diag. down/forward Y attack.


Combo the initial launcher with the second Y hit in the combo


Right as the target hits the ground, attack with a forward + X + Y attack


As soon as you're in the Blind Stance after the third hit, immediately press X + Y.


You can air control Voldo when he goes in the air to pounce on the target again.

Voldo has decent combo ability, though his air juggles are limited to 2 or 3 hits because he doesn't launch the opponent very high. Voldo's strength lies in his ability to confuse enemies with his large arsenal of moves:

IVY


Start off with Ivy's back, back + Y + B attack and hold Y + B very briefly. This should...


...perform the second hit of the attack which will launch the enemy very high into the air.


You will have to dash forward in order to continue the combo with a standing Y slash.


As soon you connect with the third hit, press forward and hold Y to catch the lackey in the air.

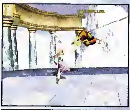

You'll drag the target out of the air and slam him into the ground for the fifth combo hit.

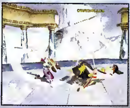
Ivy has the most variety of moves of all the normal default characters. She has the best range of any character, and has great kick attacks. As far as juggles, she doesn't have too many, but she does have an awesome air throw combo.

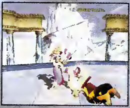
SOPHITIA


Knock the opponent up into the air with a forward, forward + Y attack.


Pause for a split second before you juggle the target with a back, back + B kick attack.

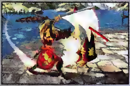

Juggle the target with Sophitia's diag. down/forward + Y attack.


Right before the target hits the ground, connect with her high damaging back, back + Y + B.


Before the target can recover, peform Sophitia's diag. up/forward + B flip attack for two more hits.

With great flexibility in moves, Sophitia is a great close to mid-range character. She has an awesome assortment of moves to start air juggles, and he great variety of high to low hitting moves make her a very dangerous character up close.

MITSURUGI



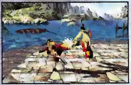
Start off with Mitsurugi's powerful X + Y standing attack..



The second hit will launch the victim in the air (duh, I know...filler text).



As soon as you can, juggle the target with a standing Y slash.



Now, smack the falling victim with a back + B kick.



Continue the combo with a Y slash attack after the kick.



Before the foe hits the ground, press B and immediately press Y.



Mitsurugi will perform a side jumping slash attack for two additional hits.

The "Ryu" of the game, Mitsurugi has no major weaknesses, thus making him a great combo character. Mitsurugi has incredible damaging moves, and this combo proves it.

KILIK



Pummel the opponent with Kilik's forward, forward + B attack



Immediately combo with a B attack to continue the combo.



Launch the target into the air with Y attack of the combo.



Press forward + B and immediately buffer into...



...a Y attack for two quick successive juggling hits.



Perform a forward, forward + Y + B attack as the foe hits the ground.



The attack will connect for two painful hits.

Long range combined with great flexibility makes Kilik a great character for combos. His only weakness is the lack of strong close weapon attacks, but his kicks make up for that fault. In fact, this combo show off how strong his kicks really are.

XIANGHUA



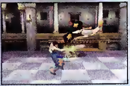
Start off with Xianghua's X + Y attack which will launch the target.



As the target falls, hit him with a forward + Y attack.



Again, hit the unfortunate victim with forward + Y attack.



Hit the opponent again with a forward + Y attack. As soon as you do...



...immediately hit with forward + Y, else your timing will be off.



Continue the second hit of the combo with a Y attack.



To add insult to injury, tack on her diag. down/back + B kick.

Xianghua's excellent close attacks, quickness, and multi-hitting moves make her an easy character to get combos off of. However, while she can hit an opponent many times, her damage off such attacks isn't great.

MAXI



Start off with Maxi unblockable back + Y + B attack.



The attack will launch the target way up and behind you. Wait until...



...the target is almost to the ground before you juggle with a B kick.



Start off the third hit with a back + Y attack and continue...



...the hit string with another Y attack. Now before the target lands...



...tack on the B kick attack of the combo. As soon as you can...



...perform a down, diag. down/forward, forward + X attack.

Maxi IS combo... that's all you really need to know. Whatever Maxi does, you bet he'll be hitting you multiple times. The problem with Maxi is he never stops swinging his nunchuka! This makes moves for combos a very selective process of what you can do.

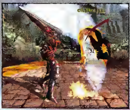
NIGHTMARE


Crouch and as you stand back up, attack with a B kick


Continue with another B kick attack and as soon as the target hits the ground...


...peform a back, back + Y, Y attack before the enemy can recover.

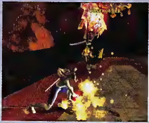

The first Y hit will slam Nightmare's sword on the victim's back while the second hit...

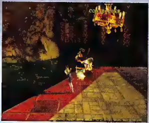

...will launch the lackey back up in the air again. Now, as the target hits the ground again...

Okay... Nightmare isn't much of a combo character, but if you get hit with a 3 hit combo from Knightmare, it's going to hurt very, very badly. Juggle combos really don't exist for Nightmare unless it's off a counter hit, but here's an interesting combo to try.

TAKI

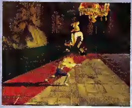

Peform Taki's back + Y + B. If the unfortunate opponent doesn't block the attack...


...you'll send the target WAY up into the air. Back up a step and continue the combo...

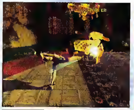

...with a simple B kick attack. Immediately follow up this kick attack...

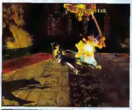

...pummel the enemy wtih a down + B, B, B, B, B attack for five additional hits.

There is no character quicker and trickier (well, maybe Voldo has more tricks), than Taki. While her attacks don't do great damage, her quickness makes it easy to combo almost anything with her.


...with Taki's forward + Y stab attack. You'll have to pause for a split second...


...if you want to connect Taki's diag. down/forward + B kick attack. Press B again...

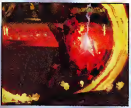

...to juggle the target again with the second B kick of this combo. Now press B again...

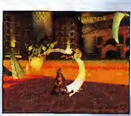

... to connect with the final B kick of this combo. As the target hits the pavement...


...press X + B for a flipping kick attack that hits the ground target twice.

ASTAROTH


Batter up with Astaroth's down, diag. down/forward, forward + Y + B unblockable attack.


This attack will send the target flying way up in the air. As the target begins to drop...


...time Astaroth's standing Y attack to juggle the lackey. Press Y again...


...to combo the second hit of the combo before the target lands. As the foe hits the dirt...


...perform Astaroth's diag. down/forward + Y + B charging attack.

Umm... okay, Astaroth is one hard character to find combos for. Because of his awesome power and range, he's not one to have great combos, but here's one that will put the hurt on most of your opponents.

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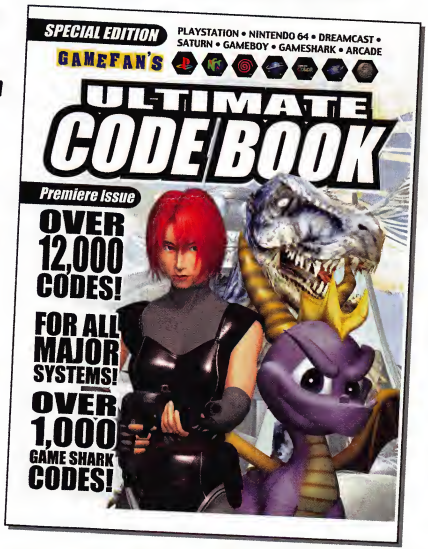
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Namco Back on Board with Nintendo

Tekken 64? Nah... but Namco has actually decided to give the Nintendo 64 a try, with a translation of their *Namco Museum Collection*, a game that originally reared its head on the PlayStation. While it's still unknown which classic arcade ports will be gracing the console, it's probably a safe bet that the 'franchise' *Pac-Man* will be there.

Although not their first N64 title (Namco actually published a baseball game a few years back for the Japanese Nintendo 64), this will be their first U.S.-published game. Could Dolphin support be waiting in the wings?

X-Box Unveiled?

We all knew it was just a matter of time before old Billy Gates tried to assert his dominance on the console industry, and according to unnamed sources, he may find his way to our television sets sooner than originally thought...

Look out Sony and Nintendo, the monopolistic tyrant known as Bill Gates has taken one step closer to revealing the 500-megahertz super system known as the X-Box, whose existence was previously (and staunchly) denied by the company just last week. Word from the ECTS show indicates that quite a few technical demos were shown running on the computer/console system to industry analysts and prospective software developers. While Microsoft continues to deny the existence of this mystery console, an official unveiling is rumored to be taking place at this year's Comdex.

Phantasy Star Online

Good news, *Phantasy Star* fanatics, Sonic Team has confirmed that they are working on a Dreamcast sequel to Sega's notorious RPG. *Phantasy Star Online* will allow you and up to two pals to experience a truly unique adventure through an online world. *PSO* should be out in Japan by spring of 2000, and expect a U.S. version to follow!

Dreamcast Gets a Life

...*Half-Life*, that is! In a press conference held right before the Tokyo Game Show, representatives from Sega confirmed that they are working on a Dreamcast port of Valve's enormously popular PC action/adventure, *Half-Life*. Using the Dreamcast modem to its fullest potential, *Half-Life* is expected to ship with full online support. Unfortunately, the multi-player romp won't hit the States till late 2000, but I can already hear the faint sounds of frags in the distance!

TrickStyle Headed For The PlayStation 2

Criterion, one of the earliest PlayStation 2 developers, has announced that they're hard at work on a version of *TrickStyle* for Sony's upcoming workhorse... and they intend to have it ready for the U.S. system launch. Because Criterion is a high-profile PS2 game and tool developer, this announcement should come as no surprise. Though the company didn't reveal whether or not the PS2 version will be a straight port of the existing Dreamcast/PC version, we suspect that the long development time assures new PlayStation 2 owners a speedier, and hopefully much more entertaining version of the game.

No Matrix For The Dolphin

In a recent press conference, home electronics kingpin, Matsushita, announced that they currently have no plans to bring their DVD movie-playing version of the Nintendo Dolphin to the U.S. So what does this mean to U.S. gamers? Well, with Nintendo's recent announcement proclaiming that their very own version of the Dolphin will not have DVD movie playback capability and Matsushita's decision not to bring theirs over, all hopes of watching your film favorites on Nintendo's next system are just about dead.

The Force Is With Sega

Lucasarts recently confirmed that *Star Wars: Racer* will definitely be making its way to the Dreamcast sometime early next year. The game will not be a direct translation of the previous N64 title, but an exact port of the Naomi arcade cabinet that should debut at about the same time.

The Phantom Nintendo 64 Game

Fear not N64 owners, while Sega may be getting an entirely new racer, you'll be getting a completely new flyer. That's right! The same folks that brought you *Rogue Squadron* are putting together an all-new *Phantom Menace* game of their own. The action is rumored to take place around the ending scene in the summer blockbuster and the game may even make it out just in time for the holiday season.

NiGHTS *Just In Time* For The Holiday Season?

Just as we thought all hope was lost for a sequel to the ever-popular Saturn game, *NiGHTS*, word from a well-vested source in Japan indicates that an early demo of the project may hit stores in Japan by this holiday season. While exact details are still sketchy, word is that a *Christmas NiGHTS*-like edition is not completely out of the question. Could this dream be too good to be true?

Square's Final Fantasy?

In this month's 'say it ain't so' rumor, a little bird recently came singing the song that the upcoming *Final Fantasy X* for the PlayStation 2 will be the last of the series. It seems that Square has decided that they have carried the series to the point where it deserves a 'Final' chapter. No worries Square-heads, while the name *Final Fantasy* may end up dying, we're all sure that Square's AAA RPGs will live forever.

Code Veronica Zips Up

Resident Evil: Code Veronica for the Sega Dreamcast has recently been confirmed as being the first DC title to fully utilize Sega's upcoming Zip Drive. Unfortunately, exact details are not known, but a persistent rumor indicates that not only will the standard alternative costumes be available to download, but also possibly side missions and all new adventures for Claire and her brother Chris. Both the Zip Drive and *RE:CV* are due out sometime early next year.

King of Samurai Blade Fighters?

Looks like SNK will finally be putting their 24-bit arcade board dinosaur to rest with a big bang this upcoming year with *King of Blades*, a *Samurai Shodown/Last Blade* hybrid. Details on this super fighter are flowing slower than molasses in January, but initial reports indicate that a tag team feature similar to SNK's very own *King of Fighters* series is all but guaranteed. Expect more details to pop up on this hot commodity in the near future.

Killer Instinct Extinct?

The oft-rumored Nintendo 64 killer fighting ap, *Killer Instinct 3D*, will not be making an appearance on the 64-bit fun machine. While a running demo of the secretive title was once seen deep in the heart of Nintendo's HQ, Rare has mysteriously destroyed the project because it ended up not being 'all that and a bag of chips.' In fact, *Killer Instinct* as a series may just be dead, as Rare is already working on a brand new fighting series for the upcoming Dolphin. Don't worry, combo specialists, some of your old *KI* favorites may end up making their way into Rare's next big project...

Warning: Talking Pikachus Invading the U.S. Summer 2000

As the Pokemon craze continues to spread like wildfire in the U.S., Nintendo is starting to reconsider bringing out the incredibly creepy, talking Pikachu game that was released in Japan over a year ago. While the Pokemon invasion seems to have no end, curious U.S. gamers who just can't wait to speak to a talking electric rat may just get their wish this Summer. Expect an announcement come E3.

Nintendo's New Partner For The Dolphin

Nintendo and S3 Incorporated have announced a brand new partnership for Project Dolphin, Nintendo's next generation video game system. Through this partnership, Nintendo's Dolphin will exclusively use S3's texture compression technology directly on the graphics chip.

So what does this mean to you and I? Well, the new texture technology (available on S3 PC cards) will allow more textures to be squeezed onto a given media and allow their utilization at high rates of speed. Kiss those days of blurry, stretched N64 games goodbye.

This—and Nintendo's previous partnership announcements—puts all the chips on the table... Now, when do we get to see the games?!

Virtual On 2 Coming This March?

According to well-vested sources deep inside the house that Sonic built, everyone's favorite mech-battler *Virtual On 2* will be making its way to US shores as early as March of 2000. As a matter of fact, it just may be the first US Dreamcast game to have full network support. For all of you impatient importers (myself included) the game will arrive in the land of the rising sun this December.

The Blair Witch Video Game

Though we have not been told what platform(s) the game is coming to, nor what kind of game it will be, GameFan has been informed by the proverbial "little birdie" that the writer/directors of the recent box-office hit, *The Blair Witch Project*, are currently shopping the rights to a video game. Keep checking with GameFan for all the details on this strange-sounding premise for a video game...

Resident Evil: Samurai Style

Capcom recently shocked the TGS masses by saying that their much-anticipated Samurai game, *Onimusha* would not be coming to the PlayStation. Of course, this was quickly followed with an announcement of *Onimusha* for the PlayStation 2. Capcom then showed off one of the most impressive CG intros ever, mixing *Yojimbo* and *Braveheart* to form one intense war scene. *Onimusha* is expected to be released summer of next year.



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A New Sony System? Seriously? No Kiddin'?

Post-Fu Master,

I humbly beg thur enlightenment on a subject that has troubled me greatly. GameFan and over 500,000 people have just jumped fully on the Sega bandwagon and bought into the Dreamcast hook, line and sinker. All the while, everyone seems to be completely ignoring the PlayStation 2, which is only six months away! I mean, you of all people should know how much booty that thing is going to kick, and everybody on the planet seems to have completely forgotten Sega's past. It wasn't so long ago that they abandoned the Saturn completely, and the 32X before it.

I've seen the PS2 demos and I'm real impressed. No, they don't blow the Dreamcast away (they're still early, though) but I'm thinking about company stability, here. If Sony makes a console that is at least as powerful as the Dreamcast, if not more, who am I gonna support? The company I believe will continue supporting ME with games, of course! Sega has got a great track record, Sony obviously has... so I'm going with a winner. Dreamcast? Yeah, there are some hot games there—for now. At least I know Sony isn't teetering on the brink of collapse if the PlayStation 2 doesn't take off. Maybe you and the rest of Team GameFan should take that into consideration when you're typing the Dreamcast and ignoring the PS2; we appreciate your love of games and fervent dedication to being hardcore, but not everybody can afford every system—some of us have to take a financial stand.

Eric Martin
Boston, Mass.

Oh, my loyal and humble student... you have allowed your financial situation (and the anti-Sega propaganda floating around the Internet and competing mags, no doubt) to cloud your judgment and send you into the downward spiral of misinformation and confusion from which there is only one exit... buried within the hallowed pages of GameFan Magazine!

We haven't raved about the PlayStation 2 very much because there hasn't been much to do other than wait, debate and speculate. As things start to get a little more "real" when it comes to Sony's upcoming console, you're gonna see us talking about it a lot more in these pages. No doubt, it's going to kick booty—there's no question about that. But you're not buying futures or trading on the stock market here... you're buying a video game system. Have you played any games for the PS2 yet? Probably not, unless you're more connected than I am—and very few men on this planet's surface are.

What is the motivation for buying a new console if not for the new games that come with it? The Dreamcast has some killer games, and more on the way... so of course, we're excited about it. As soon as the PlayStation 2 has some equally excellent tasty bits for us to devour, we're all over 'em like El Niño at an all-you-can-eat buffet. So don't be surprised (and please refrain from the tired old "bias" accusations) when our limited attention spans start focusing on the PS2... because it won't be long now!

The Zen of Artistic Fascists

Dear Posty,

I just got my Dreamcast and finally have access to non-library internet, so I'm e-mailin' ya with it. I've been playing games for about 15 years, and have always played the best games but it wasn't until I read my first issue of GameFan (Vol. 3, Iss. 1) that I realized what I was.

It was in that issue's editorial that I first read the term "enthusiast gamer." Over the years I grew to love GameFan as a whole. Though I rarely agreed completely with the staff(s), I always knew these guys were on my side. There is, and always will be, a kinship among the true hardcore gamers.

Though I miss the old guys at times, the new staff has breathed new life into the hallowed pages of GameFan. ECM especially orchestrates fantastic rants. Though we're almost polar opposites at times once 2D comes up, we're almost always eye to eye. All true gamers have the same "like it or die" attitude about their faves, so I know these guys are real. We're artistic fascists.

And Posty, you're forever part of GameFan, you're a mascot. Nintendo has Mario and Link, Sega has Sonic and Nights, and GameFan has The Postmeister and Monitaur! So in closing, what I'm really trying to say is, "Thank you, GameFan." Thank you for opening my eyes all those years ago and for producing the best magazine of all time.

Gamer for life and beyond,
Ted Biondo
Via the Internet

Though you have debased me to the level of mere mascot, rather than the man who holds the keys and guards the doors to the realms of gaming excellence, I would have shed a lone tear for your heartfelt missive. Unfortunately, as you are no doubt already aware, it is something I can never do. It's clear to me now, however, that you have embraced the tenets of Post-Fu, and are scaling these merciless peaks to sit by my side, as one of the hard-core gaming enthusiasts for which this magazine is published.

You've hit the nail right on the proverbial head... "enthusiast" is the best, most appropriate word for what we're all about. We aren't a bunch of high-minded journalistic wannabes trying to elevate game playing to the importance of business finance or international politics. Nope... we're just a bunch of hard core game players who want to warn our peers of what we think are bad games, point out the good ones, and keep you well-informed on all the latest gaming news affecting you, and the hobby you love. We are "The Last True Enthusiast Magazine." That's our whole mission statement... pretty simple, ain't it?

Agree with us, don't agree with us—but always realize that if you're hard-core, and you love video games, then you've got the right magazine clutched in those grubby little hands of yours. GameFan editors don't call themselves journalists, they call themselves gamers... just like you. It's always been that way, and it'll continue to be that way no matter how many changes take place around here. The day GameFan stops being about the "Enthusiast Gamer" is the day I take my postbag, monster truck, and frozen food cache, and make the long drive into the spacious void, dispensing gaming wisdom to the great unwashed. Trust me, though... Posty ain't planning that trip to Casper, WY any time soon!

Time Heals All High Prices

One thing I'd like to add to the PlayStation 2 debate, is that the PS2 will cost approximately the same as the original PS when it arrived in Japan... Even at $370, for this kind of technology, it's a fair price considering that most DVD players are equally as high, if not higher. No matter what company any of us favor, it's hard not to be impressed by Sony's monster of a game machine...

Tetsuo
Via the Internet

Color me impressed when I've got one sitting in my massive entertainment center, junior! Until then, it's all numbers and promises to me. Sure, the thing sounds real good... and the early demos (and we're talkin' real early here) look pretty impressive, but where do we go from there?

Let me say this: The PlayStation 2 may debut for a hefty price tag, but only die-hard import fans will be paying through the nose for it. If Sony has any problems with production or shortages in product, or if they decide to play hard-to-get with American import houses, you can expect some of the greedier mail order companies to push that puppy way up above the $500 mark when it's released in Japan. However, when Sony finally unleashes the beast on America in late Y2K, the price will have dropped quite a bit. That's the way it always works... prices for manufacturing the hardware go down a little bit, parts get integrated, things get cheaper, and we all reap the benefits.

No doubt the PS2 will be a frightening animal, hungry for your gaming dollar the day it hits shelves... but only hardened import fans will be devastating their wallets to dance with Sony in early 2000. The rest can wait until the American system launch, and blow that extra green on a few killer games!

E-mail Postage Just Got Cheaper

Hey Posty,
I am e-mailing from my Dreamcast. How cool is that?

Mike
Via the Internet

Pretty cool, man... pretty cool.

The DC-Pad Typist

Dear wisest of wise guys...
I come to you in a humbled state, not as a mere disciple of thou, but as a dude who has made your gaming wisdom dwell deep in my soul. Oh great master, what tribulation it is to see our little sheep engage in self un-enlightenment by adhering fanatically to one mere virtual enlightenment machine.

Great master, how do we teach these little ones that true gaming enlightenment comes from within, not from the machine itself... perhaps by example. I don't mean to boast, its not my way. But...

Gaming enlightment is...

...still making payments on your credit card for a $1,100 NeoGeo console purchased years ago
...owning a 3DO just to play *FIFA Soccer*
...keeping your first fanless, burnt-out PlayStation next to the 2nd, 3rd, and current fan-equipped one, and still managing to love Sony
...getting your faulty Dreamcast games, keeping them as launch souvenirs and buying replacements, and still managing to love Sega
...pulling out the Genesis on 9/9/99 in hopes that your new DC will learn from it, and then let a tear drop as you fire up *Altered Beast*, before firing up *Sonic Adventure*
...greeting Mario right back when he says 'It's-a me, Mario!' on the N64
...having your first Game Boy stored away next to all of the newer versions
...and keeping 20 Game Boy games in your locker at work.

Oh, great master, please print my humble experiences in your holy mag, because of thine great teachings I think I have attained gaming enlightenment. If not, then please spill some more knowledge upon my soul; it's my humble wish to be as you, or at least die trying...

P.S. One last try... gaming enlightenment is writing to your master through the DC 'on screen' keyboard, and loving it... knowing that the keyboard will arrive the next day!

Rodney Herrera
Via the Internet



This one came in just a tad late to make the contest deadline, but we just HAD to include it here, because how often do we get artwork from the nigh-legendary fan artist Jen Seng. Besides, I ain't afraid o' no Guile. Where've you been, Miss Seng?

My dedicated and excitable young pupil, you have toiled long and hard to reach these conclusions on your own... and for this, you are to be commended. May your name ring out from the peaks of gaming wisdom and your exuberance quicken the pulse of every gamer reading your words today. But your journey is not yet complete; you have accomplished much, but a greater task awaits!

You have ahhannened your mind, and you have proven your mental strength by plumbing the depths of the wellspring from which all gaming knowledge flows. It is a stream that I myself drink deeply from on a regular basis—part of the strict Post-Fu regimen that keeps me firm, toned, ripped, chiseled, jacked, shredded, and completely prepared for any challenge that faces me. You, too, must prepare your body, as well as your mind. Undertake the physically exhausting training of the Postal arts. Master the dreaded S.T.B. (Steel Toed Boot), which will strike fear into the hearts of all your enemies. Understand the proper applications of the P.T.F.F. (Punch That Freak in the Face, if you're nasty) law, so that no man can stand his ground in the face of your iron will. Petition all of your local grocers to discontinue the sale and distribution of canned meats of various kinds.

Only after doing all of this, will you truly attain the enlightenment you so desperately seek, and bear witness to the unimaginable heights which only Post-Fu can carry you to. It is not an easy path—but the corridors of greatness will never be tread by the weak of will. Your path is clear. I'll be watching... and waiting.

Namco & Nintendo

Since Namco has developed *Namco Museum* for N64 is there any chance that we may see titles like *Soul Calibur* or *Tekken Tag Tournament* on the Dolphin, or perhaps the N64? I am a diehard Nintendo fan, but I bought a PS for the sole purpose of playing *Tekken 3* on it. It's been over a year now and that is still the only game I own for it. The Nintendo fighters just don't cut the mustard. I really hope Namco will bury the hatchet with Nintendo and put these games out on a real platform. Why would the develop for Sega? Anything Sega has ever come out with has fallen on its face since the Genesis.

The Punisher
Via the Internet

You're absolutely right, the Nintendo 64 has been completely devoid of competitive fighting games since the day it rolled off

the assembly line, and there aren't any plans in the works for bringing any over to Nintendo's poly-pusher. Namco is playing the free agent right now, developing games for the Dreamcast, PlayStation, Wonderswan, and anything they think they can make a buck on. But the company claims they want to "focus" on just one platform... and the lucky winner there is Sony. Shocking, ain't it?

Namco may be releasing a quick-port collection for the Nintendo 64, and they may be letting Nintendo play with their Ridge Racer license for a little while, but don't expect the company to dedicate any serious time or effort on developing top-tier titles for any system but the PlayStation 2, from here on in. Soul Calibur was great, no doubt about it... but the lack of CGI intros and endings should tell you something, and it ain't that they ran short on CGI animators. The company didn't want to blow a lot of extra money on the game—they just wanted something to sell while they wait for the PS2 to be released.

These guys aren't clueless, though... they knew there was money to be made on the Dreamcast, even though they weren't sure how much. With the gargantuan sales of the DC putting half a million consoles in peoples' homes over the span of a week (hardly what I'd call "falling on their faces"), I think we can expect Namco to pony up with a few more titles for the DC. However, the fact that they're letting Nintendo develop their own version of Ridge Racer independently, and with the focus already starting to shift toward the Dolphin, I'm thinkin' Namco's not all that interested in ramping up development for the N64.

Senior Gamer Speaks Out

Dear Posty,

I am a 46 yr. old video game freak. I've been playing since before they were called "video games," so I know what I'm talking about. It amazes me every time I'm in my local E.B. or import store to see the number of parents asking the clerk, "Is this a good game," or, "Is this game suitable for my 10,9,8... year-old?" Whenever I hear this, I always recommend they buy GameFan or whatever magazine they choose, and READ THE REVIEWS! If you're so concerned about your child, and are willing to shell out the $50 for a new game, then do the research! Don't rely on someone else's opinion regarding YOUR CHILD!!

Thanks, Posty for letting me get this off my chest. Don't forget about us Senior gamers—there are more of us than you think! Thanks... GAMEFAN RULES!

Stephanie Brudecki
Via the Internet

I am considered by many to be "too old" for video gaming, so it's very good to hear from a responsible adult who is just as hard-core as they come. You're my kind of gamer, Stephanie; and it warms the cockles of my heart hearing you taking an interest in children's gaming habits. It's a shame there aren't thousands of parents with your mindset on this planet, people who are ready, willing and able to take a few minutes out of their day to help their kids learn what the right choices are in life, so that they can play games with a clear conscience and zero confusion.



Here's an artist's impression of my last journey down from the peaks of gaming Nirvana. Didn't mean to startle the poor lad... And I didn't see Dennis Baraba of Downey, CA watching as I flew by, either. Nice work, but a little past our 9/9/99 deadline to be eligible for the Dreamcast backpack.

Unfortunately, most parents in this country aren't like that. Every move the video game industry makes is geared toward helping parents help themselves, and yet not once do they make use of the tools they are given. A rating system was put in place... and they've roundly ignored it, and the accompanying website. A landslide of gaming magazines flood the racks at the local newsstand, and nary a parent picks an issue up to read through it. Knowledgeable salespeople (such as my ace mall-ninja and presidential constituent, Thuy) can also keep you up to speed on whether or not games are appropriate for your kids. So if you're really concerned about it, the resources are there... take an active role in your child's development. Heed Stephanie the 46 year-old gamer's words, and remember: Video games are for entertainment purposes only—some setting may occur during shipment, so keep your carry-on luggage securely stowed and your arms inside the vehicle at all times!

Ask and ye shall receive

Posty, I've got a couple questions for you.

1. Why do the battle scenes in the new *Dragon Quest* game look so stupid and 8-bit?
2. Is *Final Fantasy VIII* really a good game because according to your sites review it's not but according to some other video game magazine it rules, can you give me the low down?
3. Why do people dog *FFVII* now but when it came out you all loved it?
4. Why is *Soul Calibur* the deepest fighter when some rookie can come in with Kilik or Maxi and tear up an at least semi-experienced player?
5. What's up with *Chrono Cross*, any opinions?

Jon
Via the Internet

You have questions. Naturally, because it's my lot in life, I am the bearer of the answers you seek. You have come bearing no offerings, you have not prostrated yourself humbly before the banquet table of my wisdom, you have only asked that your hunger for knowledge be sated. Though I usually require some kind of edible donation (or a generous and tax-deductible campaign contribution) for the knowledge to flow, I will hook you up... because that's why you came, and that's why I'm here.

1. Because you're wearing those unattractive eye-candy goggles that came with your shiny new 32 and 64-bit game consoles. Take those goofy-looking things off, and see the game for the classic RPG it is bound to be.

2. Final Fantasy VIII is not a particularly great game. If you liked FFVII, you will probably think highly of it... if you harbor great love for the original 8 and 16-bit Square RPG's, you will probably feel the same way most of us did.

3. We didn't love it. Look at the lineup of editors currently working at GameFan, and look at the names that gave Final Fantasy VII high scores. Different crew, different opinions. GameFan staff members are not required to agree with each other, past members of the staff, or our competition. We each have our own opinions, and we give 'em to you... like them or not, agree with them or not.

4. If a rookie 'tears up' an opponent at Soul Calibur, said opponent could not have been considered experienced... not by a long shot.

5. It looks a lot like Final Fantasy VII/VIII, and I guess you know where we stood on those... we'll know more when the game is released. Let's just say it ain't the Chrono I remember...


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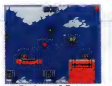
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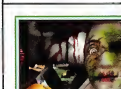
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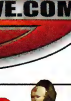
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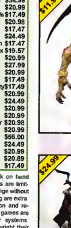
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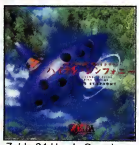
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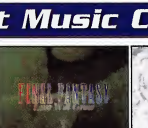
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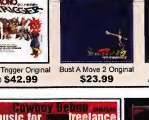
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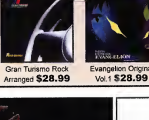
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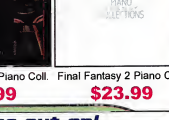
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